Wolverine Conference Banquet honors area coaches
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Today's The Herald-Palladium included inside

Niles Star

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Volunteer group making a difference in Niles

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
For Leader Publications

NILES — A group of local citizens have banded together as with the goal to make Niles a more caring place for everyone.

Niles Neighbors started as a conversation between Ricky Fouché and Brian Crespo about organizing for the elderly and those with special needs. Also present were Charles Nelson, Andy Roberts, and Dean Hill, who together planned a volunteer day to assist those in need with raking yards and attending to other difficult projects. After reaching out to other groups and programs, they formed a group of volunteers and scheduled a day of service. After lunch, though, many of the volunteers did not return, leaving the small group left to take on the rest of the work and then rethink their plan going forward.

Niles Neighbors remained but the group chose to pivot to more manageable projects. They started an effort to participate in school backpack drives, focusing on seeking donations of hygiene products and school supplies to give away. Fouché recalled the joy of watching students taking socks, tooth care products, and deodorant, indicating a clear need.

The group now has a donation site at On Base Productions in downtown Niles and displays spread throughout the community for those in need to pick up new hygiene and wellness supplies. Donated items can be found at On Base, as well as Curly Q's BBQ, In The Cut Barbershop, Kari Cares, Primitiv Group, Niles High School, and Ring Lardner Middle School. The group is actively seeking additional sites at any business or location in the community willing to host one.

"We're trying to bring people together," Fouché said.

Niles Neighbors describes their goal as bringing people together to communicate and work to make

See **VOLUNTEERS**, page A4

Niles Neighbors aims to bring people together to communicate and work to make the city a better place and assist those who may not have as strong a voice or as equal a position in the world. Photo provided

Photos by Don Campbell / Paxton Media Group

A ribbon cutting is held Nov. 21 to celebrate the completion of the downtown Buchanan project.

The wait is over

Buchanan celebrates completion of downtown streetscape project

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

An honor guard and the Buchanan High School Marching Band parade through Buchanan on Nov. 21 following a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of the downtown Buchanan reconstruction project.

BUCHANAN — A new day is dawning in Buchanan and local residents are excited to see the changes brought about by this year's $19.4 million downtown infrastructure and streetscape project.

Hundreds of residents gathered together with local, county and state officials Friday, Nov. 21, to celebrate the completion of the project and declare Buchanan "open for business." The ceremony featured remarks from business owners and others as well as a ribbon cutting featuring local youngsters.

Mayor Mark Weedon served as the master of ceremonies for the program which also featured the American Legion color guard and a performance by the Buchanan High School Band.

Weedon thanked residents and business owners for their patience over the months. He noted the uniqueness of the downtown's "tabletop" design which is the first of its kind to be installed in Southwest Michigan. The design features no curbs and provides a flexible area that encourages people to gather.

"It's been a long and dusty road," he told those gathered. "It's a project not just for today but for the next 100 years and it's a project that future generations will be able to appreciate for years to come."

Two downtown business owners were among those speaking. Carla Mayer of Glendora Books and Joe Krueger of Redbud Hardware both said the last several months have been challenging but they look forward to the future and new opportunities.

"It was challenging but we've known it was worth it," Mayer said. "By late summer, people were saying that it would be beautiful when it was done. We stuck together and had resilience and we now have a new beginning. We invite people come, stroll and linger. This will ensure the city's future."

"We had eight months of having a construction obstacle course with so much dirt and water," Krueger said. "I can say that it was worth it … This is the foundation of a new century. Small towns are not just tough, we're creative and I want to say one thing loud and clear: Buchanan is open for business."

County Board Chairman and Buchanan native McKinley "Mac" Elliott reminisced about how Buchanan has changed over the decades. He invited people to come back to the town and see what's here. "The town's character is still here but it's more welcome and inviting," he said.

Representatives from state and federal agencies also spoke. Sarah Snoeyink of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation spoke about the years of planning that led up to this project which she said is "a statement of what Buchanan is as a city."

Carly Swanson a community engagement specialist with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's office, spoke about the importance

See **BUCHANAN**, page A6

Edwardsburg school board discusses district branding

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
For Leader Publications

EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg School Board received their first look at new branding coming to the district at their regular meeting on Monday.

The update to district branding came from the work of a subcommittee, based on comments received during the most recent strategic planning process. The subcommittee and other stakeholders worked to streamline the existing variety of logos, forms, and branding into a more streamlined singular brand. Each school in the district will slightly tweak the branding for their own purposes. The new branding, including replacing signs, should begin appearing soon.

The final meeting before Thanksgiving also hosted the first round of honoring community partners with gratitude for their contributions to Edwardsburg Schools. Flatrock Grill in Edwardsburg was highlighted for donating and supporting in a variety of ways. Culver's locations in Elkhart, Granger, and Mishawaka were thanked for sponsoring the Support Staff Member of the Month

See **SCHOOLS**, page A6

The 'Golden Stove' is finally home

Legendary Round Oak stove discovered, added to museum's collection

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — In the nearly three decades that Dowagiac Area History Museum Director Steve Arseneau has been in his post, the question he's been asked most frequently by local residents and stove collectors alike is, "Where is the Gold Stove?"

The Museum's collection of Round Oak stoves, while impressive, lacked the gold-and German silver-plated centerpiece the Round Oak Stove Company created to attract attendees of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, also known as the Columbian Exposition, to its booth. After the Fair, the Round Oak Stove Company took the Gold Stove on tour, visiting Europe and all 48 contiguous US states.

See **STOVE**, page A4

Dowagiac Area History Museum Director Steve Arseneau poses with the Round Oak Gold Stove. Photo provided

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Joy Martin
Joan Gentry

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FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7702 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Maybe we should let the parents determine pedophile punishments rather than a judge.

■ The Gold Stove is the "Holy Grail" of Dowagiac artifacts ... a legendary piece whose location was unknown for decades. Now it's back home.

■ Why give a racist a platform to spew his hatred?

■ So, the boy scouts (Scouting America) are the latest vindictive target by Trump and Hegseth. Shouldn't these guys be more concerned with Ukraine and Russia?

■ Marjorie Taylor Green helped create this monster.

■ A belated congratulations to the 2026 Miss Cassopolis Court! Beautiful performance by the MMC Competition Team.

■ Go Lions!

■ The Buchanan downtown is wonderful. Once they get it 100 percent done it will be fantastic.

■ Hey, neighbors! Those leaves won't rake themselves. Lots of able-bodied folks will rake them up for you for a reasonable price.

■ Do something unexpectedly nice for someone today and everyday ... surprise them. This is what truly makes the world go-round.

WEATHER

Saturday: Snow, mainly after 7 a.m. The snow could be heavy at times. High near 31. Southeast wind 5 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 100%. New snow accumulation of 3 to 7 inches possible.

Saturday Night: Snow. The snow could be heavy at times. Low around 25. Southeast wind 10 to 15 mph becoming southwest after midnight. Winds could gust as high as 20 mph. Chance of precipitation is 100%. New snow accumulation of 3 to 7 inches possible.

Sunday: Snow, possibly mixed with rain, becoming all snow after 1 p.m. High near 35. Northwest wind 10 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 90%. New snow accumulation of less than one inch possible.

Sunday Night: A 50 percent chance of snow, mainly before 1 a.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 17.

Monday: A 20 percent chance of snow after 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 27.

Monday Night: A 50 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 14.

Cass Family Clinic launches new Integration Station

SUBMITTED

Photos provided

The Integration Station, located in a former Cass County probation office on M-62 near Cass Family Clinic's Cassopolis clinic, operates from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Cass Family Clinic has announced the launch of its new Integration Station to improve its customer service experience for patients.

CASSOPOLIS — Cass Family Clinic has announced the launch of its new Integration Station to improve its customer service experience for patients.

The Integration Station, located in a former Cass County probation office on M-62 near Cass Family Clinic's Cassopolis clinic, operates from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"Previously, Cass Family Clinic's health centers each received their own incoming patient calls," said Cass Family Clinic Director of Clinical Operations Tennille Buck-Hooper, BSN, RN, who oversees the Integration Station. "The receptionists at each of our sites had to toggle between talking with patients in the office and patients calling in on multiple phone lines. The new Integration Station streamlines the entire call-in process, allowing dedicated staff to handle incoming calls, while our in-office staff is able to give undivided attention to patients when they arrive at one of our health centers."

When patients call the phone number for one of Cassopolis Family Clinic's three locations in Cassopolis, Dowagiac or Niles, between 7:45 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays, and select their preferred option, they will be automatically directed to the Integration Station extension and answered as soon as the next available Integration Station staff member is available.

Cass Family Clinic's pharmacy and dental centers will continue using their direct lines for incoming patient calls.

"The Integration Station enables in-office staff to focus on other tasks, such as following up on missed or canceled appointments, and scheduling patients for annual physical exams – all of which helps improve quality measures and access for our patients," said Buck-Hooper. "Our new process through the Integration Station not only strengthens patient customer service experience, it also unifies our internal clinical operations."

Nadzieja Pocheki, director of Cass Family Clinic's Mobile Health Clinic, shared the Integration Station has been an incredible asset for streamlining communications between all Cass Family Clinic's facilities, including the Mobile Health Clinic.

"The Integration Station has already proven itself as a bridge that connects providers, empowers staff, and supports safer, more coordinated care," Pocheki said. "Our experience has been phenomenal as the amazing team has been able to connect us to the team member that we need within minutes to provide support."

Pokagon Band donates 1,000 Thanksgiving food boxes

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

Four Winds team members pose for a photo Tuesday. The Pokagon Band and Four Winds Casinos donated 1,000 food boxes to those in need during the week of Thanksgiving.

Photo provided

NEW BUFFALO — The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana and its Four Winds Casinos announced Tuesday a donation of 1,000 food boxes to those in need during the week of Thanksgiving.

This year's Thanksgiving food box includes a Turkey, Yukon Potatoes, Green Beans, Seasonal Squash, French Fried Onions, Evaporated Milk, and Pumpkin Roll. Distribution will be completed through several organizations and Four Winds Casinos team members were present today at The Pillar Center located at 315 E. Main Street in Benton Harbor, Mich. at 1 p.m. eastern to hand out 300 food boxes.

Additional recipient organizations include: Decatur Human Services in Decatur; Marcellus Community Food Pantry in Marcellus; Cooperating Ministries/Methodist Church in Hartford; Action Ministry Center in Dowagiac; Caring Connection in Benton Harbor; Lawrence United Methodist Church in Lawrence, and Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Citizens.

"The Pokagon Band and our Four Winds Casinos are very proud to continue our long-standing tradition of providing meals to those in need during the holiday season," said Matthew Wesaw, Tribal Council Chairman of the Pokagon Band. "Food banks typically experience a significant increase in demand during Thanksgiving, and fortunately we are in a position to be able to help fill any gaps."

"2025 marks the tenth consecutive year of this program and we hope this offering will lift the spirits and ease the burden of individuals and families struggling to put food on the table for the Thanksgiving holiday," added Mary Smith, Chief Operating Officer of Four Winds Casinos added.

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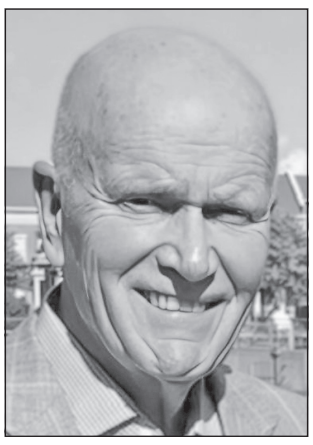
Larry Crandall

September 4, 1948 – November 22, 2025



Larry Crandall, 77, passed away November 22, 2025, at Forest Glen Assisted Living in Dowagiac MI after an eight-year struggle with Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus. Lawrence Arthur Crandall was born Sept 4, 1948, in South Haven MI to Donald E. and Roselyn Crandall. He grew up in Bangor MI and graduated from Bangor High School in 1966. Four days after he got his driver's license, he took that cute sophomore cheerleader Jody Beyer on their first date and, as they say, the rest is history. Almost eight years later they were married on June 17, 1972, in South Haven MI.

While in high school Larry played basketball and baseball and delivered flowers for his mother's flower shop. He always said his best job ever was working for McKane Funeral Home. "Burt's boys" wore their suits to school and left early to park cars and assist families to and from the cemetery. His love of fine suits and neckties was set early. He later spent summer painting for Bangor Schools.

Ignoring his high school principal's advice not to waste his parents' money, Larry went to Spring Arbor College and played golf. After a mutually agreed "one and done," he transferred his confident and independent skill set to Central Michigan University where he was active in Student Senate and the newly formed Sigma Pi fraternity. He was instrumental in the purchase of the first Sigma Pi fraternity house in Mt. Pleasant. He graduated in 1970 with a degree in Political Science and secondary education. Later he earned a Masters Degree in Counseling and Personnel from Western Michigan University plus did post graduate work in Educational Leadership.

He launched his 36 years of dedication to Dowagiac Schools by taking his first job as government teacher, golf and basketball coach. He was a popular teacher with high expectations and worked to know every one of his students. He encouraged them to think independently, know current events and make informed decisions. His love of basketball led to twenty years as a registered official culminating in being chosen to referee the MHSAA Class B finals twice. He also umpired the MHSAA baseball finals in 1977. He later developed the Law Related Education class which won numerous state and national awards.

Larry's career soon progressed into the position of Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Personnel and he retired in 2006 as Superintendent of Schools. The proudest memories of his career centered around the dedication of teachers and staff to help students do their best to reach goals and meet state standards. He liked nothing better than to visit an elementary classroom, do his special handshake, read a popup-book and sing a song.

Debbie Heeter, his administrative secretary, recalls "he was well respected. He insisted on professionalism and teamwork. First impressions are everything...so always have your shoes shined he would tell me. I have lost a dear friend".

As local newsman John Eby wrote after his retirement party, "Crandall's three C's and two F's (faith and family) wouldn't make much of a report card, but they were the "guiding premise" of his precisely organized management style as Superintendent of more than three hundred employees and over twenty-five hundred students. Larry said a leader must have the courage of his convictions, compassion and commitment." Two of Larry's strengths were communicating with all walks of life and being a good listener. He always said he never worked a day in his life.

As a central office administrator, Larry was a member of the Michigan Association of School Administrators and served as president of Region 7 (seventy Southwest Michigan school districts). He was a presenter at a State Superintendents conference on Collaborative Collective Bargaining. He and the high school counselor developed the School District Crisis Response and Suicide Intervention Plan, one of the first in the State of Michigan, and used as a model by many other districts. Always thinking about telling the Dowagiac school story to the community, he developed the weekly radio program on WDOW "Looking inside Dowagiac Schools" which aired for 18 years every Wednesday morning and during halftime of the football games. He is also remembered for sending "Look Who's in the News" to every student and employee featured in the local newspapers along with a handwritten personal note. Along the way, Larry decided the school district needed to meet the needs of students who required a non-traditional format to be successful. He convinced the School Board to purchase the Eliason factory building near the airport and open Pathfinders Alternative School. He was a member of the steering committee that finally convinced a skeptical community that a new middle school was needed. It was dedicated in Sept 2005. He then worked with city officials in tearing down the old middle school to make way for the Lyons Medical Center.

Larry's dedication to Dowagiac not only took place in the schools but also in the community.

One of his first bridges was building a relationship with city hall. He regularly met with the city manager visioning the future. APEX was the first project which involved the school and community to build a track/soccer/softball complex open 24/7 to the community. He was also active in the Boys Baseball Association as a coach, umpire and mentor to pitchers. In 2002, he green lighted the formation of the Chieftain Golf outing committee to raise money for the Athletic Booster Club and the Dowagiac Schools Foundation (which he started). To date they have raised over $800,000 for Dowagiac students and teachers.

Some of his proudest moments were serving the community in volunteer positions such as serving on the Cass County United Way Board for ten years, being instrumental in the merger of the Cass County School and Governmental Employees credit union with then Berrien Teachers Credit Union (now Honor CU) to give members better access to savings and loan options, as a Campaign Co- Chair of the Borgess Lee Hospital fundraiser of $1.6 million to rebuild the emergency room, Trustee chairman of the First United Methodist Church and building chair for their $600,000 remodeling project that expanded from the need for a new roof. As with anything Larry was involved in, the message was "build it to the best of your ability" and "good enough isn't good enough". His most recent project was the Welcome To Dowagiac structure at the Rite Aid corner. For decades his wife listened to his vision every time they rode past that corner. As a dedicated Rotary member for over three decades and president of the Dowagiac Rotary Charitable Foundation for many years, he finally got his wish when the club celebrated their 100th anniversary. Working with the city, they purchased the corner from the State of Michigan in a three-year patience testing process including COVID. Meanwhile he raised over $60,000 from Rotary members and their families to develop the corner.

In his "spare time" he served for five years as caddie master at the Western Amateur Golf tournament at Point O'Woods golf course. He coordinated the Elks Hoop Shoot for many years. He was a long-time emcee of the annual All Sports banquet. He sold Franklin Life insurance to young adults to foster a lifetime of "saving and spending" responsibly. He was a cast member (red wig and all) in the longest running play at the Beckwith Theater, "Brother Benjamin and the House of David". For forty-eight years he went fishing in Canada with the same three Bangor friends. For three decades he was a Notre Dame men's basketball season ticket holder rarely missing a home game. While traveling over the years to visit his sons in various parts of our country, he visited more than 120 college campuses. He enjoyed his workshop in the winter and his yard work in the summer. His green grass was the envy of the neighborhood.

Along with his love of his community, Larry loved the game of golf, teaching his sons to play, and finally celebrated a hole in one at Harbor Shores Golf Club. He was fortunate to play at both Pebble Beach and St. Andrews in Scotland. He loved his Detroit Tigers and Lions, Notre Dame sports, his John Deere and most of all, his family. Larry had many career opportunities to leave Dowagiac, but felt raising his sons in a multicultural, economically diverse small town was good preparation for life. No matter how busy, he always put family first and spent many hours with his sons catching pitches, shooting free throws (sometimes still in his suit and necktie), putting a golf ball, watching ball games.

He leaves to cherish his memory his wife of 53 years Jody (Joellyn), sons Justin (Valerie) of Broomfield, CO, and Jordan (Stephanie) of Charlotte NC and four grandchildren Cody, Kyla, Lincoln, and Palmer and bonus sons Christopher (Molly, Callahan) Craft of St. Joseph MI and Etienne "Steve" Mazimpaka of Tallahassee FL. He also leaves his sister-in-law LeWain Crandall, and brothers-in-law Jim (Marla) Beyer and Bruce (Denise) Beyer and nieces and nephews. They will remember his interest in and support of their lives, his quiet counsel, his sense of humor including the puns, his love of music, his Ruff the Lion bedtime stores, and most of all, his deep abiding love for them and his core belief for always doing the right thing, caring for and serving others.

Recently someone was asked if they know Larry Crandall. The answer, "Yes. He was class act".

Preceding him in death were his parents, siblings Donald E. Jr. and Linda Burrous and his in- laws Howard and Beverly Beyer. The family would like to thank the caregivers at Forest Glen Assisted Living and their Corsocare Hospice Team.

A service to celebrate Larry's life will be held at 11:00 AM on Saturday, December 6, 2025, at First United Methodist Church, 326 N Lowe St, Dowagiac, where friends may visit with his family from 10:00 AM until the time of service. A luncheon and personal stories and memories will follow at Dowagiac Middle School, 57072 Riverside Dr, Dowagiac. Memorial contributions in Larry's name may be directed to the Dowagiac Schools Foundation, PO Box 111, Dowagiac, MI 49047 or to the Bangor Alumni Foundation, 801 W. Arlington, Bangor, MI 49013. Arrangements were entrusted to Clark Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Home, Dowagiac. To share a memory or offer condolences, please visit Larry's personalized webpage at www.clarkch.com.

Georgina Dunham

August 16, 1938 – November 20, 2025

Georgina Barron "Gina" Dunham, 87, of Niles, died peacefully Thursday, November 20, 2025 in the comfort of her family's presence.

Her life began August 16, 1938 in Cheboygan, Michigan the only child born to Frank and Jean Barron. She married Richard J. "Dick" Dunham in June 1961 in Trinity Episcopal Church, Niles. After fifty-four years of marriage, he preceded her in death August 23, 2015.

Gina cherished her family as they were the guiding force. She was a member and President, at one time, of the Niles Garden Club. She was also a member of Seepewa Reading Club. She was a 1956 graduate of Niles High School. She was a life long member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Niles and was the historian of the church. Gina majored in history and minored in English Literature at Indiana University where she graduated with a Bachelors Degree. She and Dick enjoyed traveling. After his retirement, they drove to and around Alaska for at least six weeks. They also traveled to Scotland and Ireland. The family has fond memories of camping trips in rustic areas. She was an avid reader, especially historical fiction.

Gina will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her three sons, Sean (Jennifer) Dunham of Bemidji, Minnesota, Daniel (Hanh) Dunham of Tarpon Springs, Florida, James Dunham of White Pigeon; six grandchildren, Elaine Williams, Paige (Fred) Somes, Caroline Frandsen, Jessica Dunham, Bridget Dunham, Barron Dunham; two great grandchildren, Graham Somes, Eleanor Somes; and niece, Christine Phillips.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her beloved husband.

Family and friends will gather for a Memorial Service at a date and a time to be announced. Gina will be encrypted with her husband in Silverbrook Cemetery. Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Joan Gentry

February 26, 1962 – November 23, 2025

Joan Kathleen Miars Gentry (age 63) of Sawyer, Michigan passed away on November 23, 2025, surrounded by the love of family and friends. Despite her long battle with Alzheimer's Disease, she lived a life full of adventure and wonderful memories. She was the daughter of Georgiana Elinor McKinley Timm Miars and Camden Morgan Miars, of Niles MI. Georgie and Cam were the co-owners of Camden TV and Appliance that is still serving the Michiana area today.

Joanie graduated from Niles High School in 1980 and attended Michigan State University. Joan married Brian Jennings Gentry in 1983, and they had two children, Katherine (Daniel) Deitrich and Graham (Kayla) Gentry. She is very proud of her children and all their accomplishments. She adored her five grandchildren; Calvin, Jack, Jovie, Kennedy and Emily, whom she lovingly referred to as "the turtles."

Joan is survived by her seven siblings: Mark (Pam) Miars, Lonnie (Joseph) Heywood, Greg (Laura) Miars, Dean (Christine) Miars, Mary Miars. Anita (Steve) Schultz and Jim (Tami) Miars.

Known for her sharp mind and leadership, she served as the Head of Product Safety at Whirlpool Corporation in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Outside of work, Joan's passion was the great outdoors. She loved Lake Michigan and the trails of Warren Dunes State Park, spending a lot of time there combing the beaches for petoskey stones and beach glass.

She discovered a passion for nature photography, selling her prints at local markets. She was also an excellent cook and baker, something she did throughout her life. With her partner Chris, they enjoyed bird watching and feeding the "critters" at their home in the woods.

She will be remembered for her warmth, laughter, fun-loving spirit, resilience, and love. Her memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew her. If you would like to leave online condolences for Joanie and her family, please visit www.palmerfuneralhomes.com.

Joy Martin

March 12, 1952 – November 11, 2025

Joy Linell Martin, 73, of Grand Rapids, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, November 11, 2025.

Her life began on March 12, 1952, in Niles, Michigan, a native of Cassopolis, Michigan, the fourth of four children born to George and Margaret Cooper.

Joy lived a life marked by patience, kindness, and love. She enjoyed spending time with her grandkids and family and had a deep appreciation for life's simple joys. She loved all things Hallmark – especially the movies – along with music, visiting friends, reading scripture, and flying through a good book. Joy also loved exploring local gardens and could never resist good seafood or some dark chocolate. She will be remembered for her gentle spirit, her generous heart, and the way she made everyone around her feel cared for and seen.

Joy will be greatly missed by her daughter, Beth (BJ) George of Wyoming, Michigan; her stepson, Tom (Rachel) Martin of Fort Wayne, Indiana; grandchildren Akuach, Liam, Simon, and Oliver George, and Grace, Jacob, and Jack Martin; her sister Nancy Brown of Brownsville, Vermont; her brother Ted (Kandy) Cooper of Dowagiac, Michigan; nephew Josh (Shannon) Cooper of Cedar Springs, Michigan, and their children Mia and Gage; and niece Christine (Peter) Reiter.

She was preceded in death by her parents, George and Margaret Cooper, and her brother Jerry Cooper.

Family and friends will gather Saturday, December 6, 2025 for a service at 12 Noon in Pleasant View Church of Christ, 60550 Crooked Creek Road (corner of M 60) in Cassopolis, Michigan. The family prefers contributions in memory of Joy be made to Honor Flight Network, 175 South Tuttle Road, Springfield, Ohio 45505 (honorflight.org), a reflection of her deep and heartfelt love for those who have sacrificed so much for their country.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Niles church hosts Thanksgiving food basket giveaway

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Mount Calvary Baptist Church, 601 Ferry St., Niles, hosted its annual Thanksgiving Food Basket Giveaway Saturday, Nov. 22.

Church volunteers were hard at work last weekend preparing 100 baskets for families throughout Southwest Michigan, including Niles, Benton Harbor, Mishawaka, Dowagiac and more. The baskets include traditional Thanksgiving food items families prepare at home including turkey, green beans, stuffing, macaroni and cheese, corn and more.

Several church members and community members donated food items to make the giveaway possible.

"I think it's important and being a church, our goal is to serve and be with the community and be of assistance," said church member Marci Taylor. "We're just serving the will of God."

"We're helping people in need," said church member Glenn Howard Sr. "That's what it's all about. That's what Jesus did, feeding the people like we're doing now."

For Taylor and her fellow church members, spreading joy during the holidays and throughout the year is important.

"It's been very heartfelt because to hear the people and they're so appreciative during these times with the cuts to SNAP benefits," Taylor said. "We had a gentleman come in who said his wife wasn't able to get around at 71 and he appreciated the love. A lot of people are very appreciative of the fact that we've been able to help them out."

Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Niles hosted its annual Thanksgiving Food Basket Giveaway Saturday, Nov. 22.
Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thank you, A.C.T.I.O.N.

To Dowagiac's A.C.T.I.O.N. Center & Thanksgiving Celebration Supporters,

Thank you all for the truly special Community Thanksgiving Celebration held last Sunday at Dowagiac's Junior High School cafeteria.

The worship service singing, scriptures, and personal comments were uplifting.

The food was delicious and plentiful.

The service was efficient ... and continuous throughout the evening. Having high school club and activity students provide beverage refills throughout the event was a bonus!

The school cafeteria was an excellent venue for such an event ... large enough to seat everyone comfortably and it had plentiful parking.

It was a wonderful opportunity to make new friends as well as to enjoy extended family. Whether a toddler or a senior citizen, a good time was had by all. Everyone was so kind.

Giving thanks,

Barbara Groner,
A Dowagiac Local

IN BRIEF

Niles MSP to host annual 'Stuff a Blue Goose' event

NILES — A local law enforcement agency is doing its part to make sure area families have a happy and healthy holiday season.

The Michigan State Police Niles Post will host its annual "Stuff a Blue Goose" event from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6 at the Niles Walmart Supercenter, 2107 S. 11th St., and Stevensville Meijer, 5019 Red Arrow Hwy. The term "Blue Goose" is a nickname troopers gave the MSP patrol cars shortly after the color scheme was updated from black and gold to bright blue in 1954. Troopers at the time dubbed it the "Blue Goose" in parody of Blue Goose Lines, a well-known commercial bus line of that time.

A blue MSP patrol car will be stationed outside of both Niles Walmart and Stevensville Meijer the day of, where troopers will volunteer their time to collect donations. Toys and gift cards collected will be distributed to both the Wonderland Toy Store in Benton Harbor and the Cass County Toys for Tots program, while the food and toiletries will be sent to both Helping Hands of Cass County in Cassopolis and Red Bud Area Ministries in Buchanan.

Those unable to attend the event are encouraged to visit the Niles Post, where donations are also being collected.

Plane traveling from Canada crashes at SWMI airport

BENTON HARBOR — Aviation officials are investigating a Wednesday plane crash at the Southwest Michigan Regional Airport in Benton Harbor.

During a press conference held Wednesday afternoon, Airport Director Christopher Beckman said the cause of the two-passenger plane's crash is still being probed by the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board.

He said the plane was traveling from Canada, but experienced unknown difficulties midair and decided to make an emergency stop at the airport.

The two occupants of the single-engine, bush-style plane were both taken to the hospital, but sustained minor injuries and have since been cleared. Out of respect for the individuals' families and making sure they find their relatives are safe first, Beckman said the names of the occupants are not being shared.

While the airport closed the runways for a couple hours to respond to the crash, Beckman said it is back open. At this point, any closures would be caused by something else, like snow accumulation.

LMC officials to present on improved campus security

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
For Leader Publications

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College's student life team will highlight efforts to improve campus safety and security practices next year at a national conference in Kansas City, Mo.

The news coincides with LMC's observation of Clery Compliance Week, a national event held in early October on college and university campuses nationwide, as Melissa Grau, dean of student life and engagement, told LMC board members last week.

This year marks LMC's second major participation in Clery Week, which takes its name from the Jeanne Clery Act, a federal law requiring colleges and universities to report recent crime statistics, and publicly disclose them, Grau said.

"I love coming to have conversations with you, because I get to share all the good news – and that makes me happy," Grau told the board. "The good news is that we've done a lot of collaborating, because obviously, compliance is very important to us. But what's even more important to us is educating our students, and getting them to understand their safety."

Leah Coyle, director of student life and residence, joined Sabrina Heinrichs, administrative assistant for accreditation of strategic projects and quality, in detailing the college's efforts to improve safety and security awareness among LMC's student population.

Together, they worked on those efforts as part of a committee with Melissa Emery, dean of accreditation, projects and quality.

"The thought process was that we were going to transform our policy, to promote better participation, and better prevention," Coyle said. "We didn't want to just check the box for Clery compliance, because that's what so many other institutions do."

LMC President Trevor Kubatzke voiced his appreciation for their work.

"Having been in this business a long time – this is the first place I ever worked, that actually did something like this. Usually, it was, 'Put a flyer on the wall, and check the box,'" he said.

The trio will review their efforts in a presentation called "Pizza, Policy and Prevention: How Clery Transformed Campus Safety," at the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) conference in March.

"We submitted a proposal, and got selected. Not only are we recognized here in Michigan, as a first, but they want us to educate on a national level of what we've been doing. So we are super thrilled about that," Coyle said.

Getting students to follow basic security practices – such as keeping doors locked – is one of the cornerstones of Clery Week, Coyle told the board.

"Unfortunately for Jeanne Clery, her door was not locked the night she was sexually assaulted and killed. So we want to make sure, in our residence hall, that all doors are locked," she said.

One of the major initiatives is "Delivery for Clery," a program that focuses on checking locks and door handles, to make sure that they're working, and being used correctly, Coyle said.

Last year's inspection at Beckwith Hall found 54.7 percent of its doors were unlocked, which fell to 24.5 percent, after the 2024 campaign – and again to 9 percent, after this year's observances.

Students who kept their doors locked were eligible to enter a gift card drawing from Silver Beach Pizza, which sponsors Clery Week at LMC, Coyle said.

The Clery Committee held a pizza party for its kickoff event, since Clery's assailant managed to get into her dorm by keeping her doors open with pizza boxes, Heinrichs said.

Other featured events of the 2024 Clery campaign included efforts to raise awareness of LMC's "blue lights," or emergency call stations, Coyle said.

"Many students had no idea that they go directly to 911 – they thought it would just be our security on campus," she said.

The blue light campaign wound up reaching around 160 students last year, improving to 285 for this year's event, she added.

LMC also rolled out an anti-hazing initiative this year, reflecting the addition of new language to the Clery Act along those lines, Coyle said.

The 2025 campaign also included a hazing "myth-busting" program, and the posting of red flags around campus for students, who could switch them to a green one, after they signed an anti-hazing pledge.

"In under two hours, all the red flags on campus turned green, because they believe in stopping hazing as much as we do," Coyle said. "So it was just really great to see our community have this belief systen that we have, that hazing is not tolerated here at Lake Michigan College."

The committee also worked to deputize resident assistants in campus security procedures, which gives students a resource to report crimes, while reinforcing the message that safety is everyone's job, Heinrichs said.

As a result, Heinrichs said LMC has now boosted its number of trained campus authorities from 20 to 120 people.

The Clery Committee now has a student representative, to give them a voice in whatever programming it does – including podcasts or videos it may produce.

STOVE

From page A1

But once the Round Oak Stove Company was sold out to Indianapolis' Peerless Furnace in 1947, historians lost track of the special artifact.

78 years later, the Gold Stove has returned home. The stove was in the care of Frank Mutz II of Brookhaven, Georgia, a descendent of Peerless executives Frank M Mutz I and Harold W. Mutz. Mutz has now generously donated the Gold Stove to the Dowagiac Area History Museum's collection.

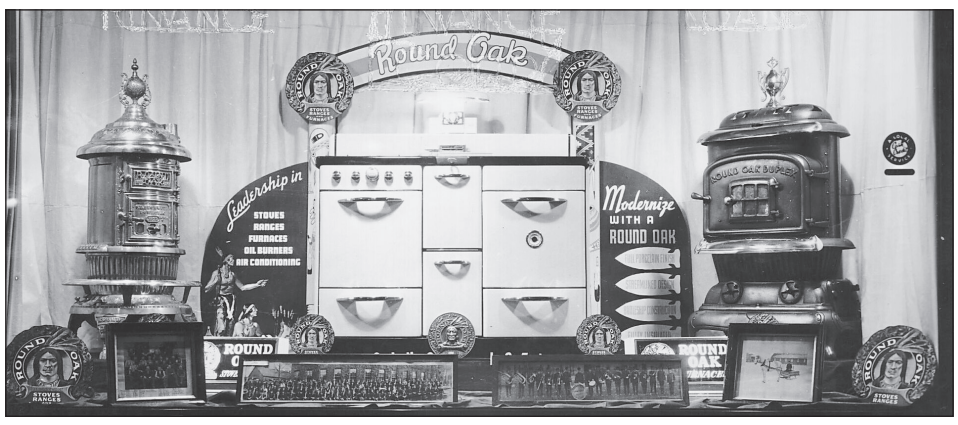


Photo provided

The 1893 Chicago World's Fair exhibit display pictured at 122 S. Front Street (currently Yarn on Front) during Dowagiac's centennial celebration in 1948. The Gold Stove is pictured on the left.

The Round Oak Stove Company and Dowagiac

Founded in Dowagiac in 1871, the Round Oak Stove Company transformed the southwest Michigan town into an industrial powerhouse. By the early 1900s, Round Oak was one of the premier manufacturers of heating stoves in America and abroad. It was Dowagiac's largest employer and the city's economic backbone for decades before closing shortly after World War II. Round Oak stoves, renowned for their beautiful craftsmanship, have been highly sought after by collectors ever since, and the Dowagiac Area History Museum has one of the largest collections in existence.

"We have some unique Round Oak stoves on display, from the oldest Beckwith stove still in existence to the Kate Lee, but the 1893 Columbian Exposition Gold Stove is now the crown jewel of our collection," Arseneau said. "It's essentially the Holy Grail of Dowagiac artifacts.

Huge thanks to Frank Mutz and his family for taking great care of the Gold Stove for nearly 80 years, then recognizing how important it is to both the Dowagiac community and stove collectors alike and donating it to our museum."

"On behalf of the Mutz family, it is my privilege and honor to return the Round Oak Gold Stove home to Dowagiac, Michigan, after being in our care for 78 years," Mutz said.

The Gold Stove's journey

The Gold Stove was part of the assets Peerless Furnace purchased when the Round Oak Stove Company closed in 1947. Once Peerless was sold in 1965, the Gold Stove was passed to Harold Mutz's son, Oz, and displayed in his homes for 50 years. It was then passed to Frank Mutz II, who displayed it at his company, Moncrief Heating and Air Conditioning in Atlanta.

In fall 2024, Mutz did some research and contacted the Dowagiac Area History Museum, knowing that it was potentially a good home for the historic piece.

"A year ago, I was not ready to let the Gold Stove go," said Mutz. "[But] I'd connected well with Steve Arseneau, emailing and speaking with him on the phone. Last month, I decided it was time to send the Gold Stove home to Dowagiac, Michigan, and in the good care of Steve Arseneau."

"I can honestly say that I jumped out of my seat with a shout of joy," Arseneau said.

While many pieces of metal-based equipment from that time period have long since been scrapped or repurposed, Arseneau never gave up hope that his elusive "white whale" was still out there, waiting to return home.

"The fear was that it might have been scrapped at some point decades ago," he said. "But in the back of my mind, I always figured, 'Who would scrap it?' I just figured it was out there somewhere. It was just a matter of the person who had it finding us and doing what Frank Mutz did. That was the fear, but I thought nobody would scrap this. I'm glad it didn't get scrapped during World War II or any of those metal drives."

Last week, Arseneau and longtime Round Oak collector Bill Krohne, also a member of the Museum Board, drove to the Atlanta area to pick up the Gold Stove and bring it home.

"We've been looking for that stove for a long time," Krohne said. "We suspected it went to the owners of Peerless, but we were hoping it was still in one piece and hadn't been traded, stolen, or sold. It was a real relief. We had already been talking about adding things to the museum, and for [Arseneau] to get that call, it all fit into place.

"I always wanted to find that thing and figure out where it was before I died. It was one of those deals," Krohne continued. "The family was so nice and so kind. Before we got to where the stove was, they took us out to lunch at a golf place not too far from there. They had all these other pieces to go with it, and they knew the history. That was just the kindest thing for them to do for our town."

'A one-of-a-kind piece'

The Dowagiac Area History Museum is currently fast-tracking the process of cataloging the Gold Stove and preparing a space for it to be displayed. It will be on exhibit by mid-December. "Some of our stoves that are out are within arm's reach. I have to reprimand quite a few visitors because I know the exact sound of when one of our stove doors opens," Arseneau said. "We don't want this one within reach. I'm going to work with a carpenter to design a cabinet, a stand or base for it to stand on with plexiglass surrounding it, so people won't be able to get to it. In terms of processing it, there is a cataloging process we call 'accessioning.' We check the dimensions, get the provenance into our computer database and assign it a number. That way when I retire, somebody can come in, check the item number and find its history. We'll be doing that in the next week or so. My hope is we can get this on display, and you can come in here before Christmas and see the gold stove."

Prior to being installed on its display, the stove will be wiped down with a soft cloth to remove polish residue and be left as-is for the world to see.

"We're going to get as much polish residue out of here and polish off any fingerprints it may have," he said. "We're not planning on touching it with any more polish or doing any kind of buffing. We're keeping it pretty much as is from here on forward. We have a good controlled environment here in the museum with humidity and temperature controls, so it should maintain its condition."

Arseneau and Krohne encourage the public to visit the museum once the stove is on display to see a one-of-a-kind piece that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

"We've always had 15 to 20 stoves on display, but you can see those in Potbelly sandwich shops. This item is one you cannot see anywhere else but here at the Dowagiac Area History Museum," Arseneau said. "It also has a great connection to the Colombian Exposition at the Chicago World's Fair. History books have been written about that, including 'Devil in the White City.' We actually have an item from the Dowagiac Manufacturing Company that was also on display at the Exposition. I don't know how many small museums in America have two great showpieces from the Colombian Exposition."

"[Round Oak] was so well respected and so important to our history; not just the town, but Southwest Michigan," Krohne said. "This stove is one of the biggest things we could possibly have. To have two pieces from Dowagiac in the World's Fair in 1893 and in other World's Fairs and expeditions is pretty special."

VOLUNTEERS

From page A1

the city a better place and assist those who may not have as strong a voice or as equal a position in the world.

The group meets at On Base Productions to discuss their efforts, with the gatherings open to anyone, regardless of background, who is willing to give time, supplies, or simply spread the word about their work. They have no official structure, but emphasize action through volunteering. They meet to discuss and listen to ideas about what the community needs and where they can step in.

Niles Neighbors hopes to rebuild their volunteer base and return to their efforts of raking leaves or assisting with other projects that may be difficult for those in hospice, the elderly, or those otherwise struggling. Fouché envisions a future that brings together the separate communities of Niles, through shared efforts and events.

The group is investigating funding through grants and other sources to acquire the required tools and keep an inventory of supplies for their efforts. Those in the community who are able are invited to donate items, time or energy. According to their brochure, "every act of kindness matters."

"Help us help others," Fouché said.

Those interested in donating or participating with Niles Neighbors and bring items to On Base Productions or reach out to the group at (269) 262-6253 or at facebook.com/NilesNeighbors.

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Niles man gets 25 years for sexual assault of minor

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

NILES — A packed courtroom witnessed a Niles man being sentenced to 25 years in prison for molesting a minor child between 2020 and 2022.

McCLAIN

Family and friends of the victim along with members of the Michiana chapter of Guardians of the Children filled the courtroom at the Niles courthouse.

Samuel Cole McClain, 36, of Niles, pleaded guilty to first-degree criminal sexual conduct involving a victim under age 13 and a defendant over age 17 and was sentenced to 25 years to 50 years in prison. He has credit for 105 days served and must pay $258 in fines and costs. He must register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.

The incidents between January 2020 and December 2022 at a location in Niles.

The victim's mother spoke before the sentencing as did a member of the Guardians of the Children who read the victim's statement. In all, over two dozen people attended the sentencing to support the victim and her family.

The statement from the victim noted that she has had trouble coping with what happened including having trouble sleeping and focusing on her school work. She said she had to cover up bruises she suffered from the physical abuse at his hands as well as the emotional abuse from when he threatened to kill himself if she told anyone.

"I never want to see him again," the victim said in her statement. "I suffered physical, social and emotional harm. I was isolated from my mom and my friends. I ask for the most severe punishment possible."

The victim's mother said that her daughter's life has been completely transformed after the abuse and that she has suffered from anxiety and depression. "Her memories follow her everywhere," the mother said. "… He stole her innocence and it will have an impact on her for the rest of her life."

The mother asked for a sentence of life in prison.

"The sentence should reflect what he did to her," she said. "My daughter is a good kid, she didn't deserve this."

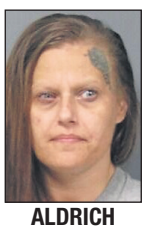
Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Jerry Vigansky said McClain deserves every day of prison that he will get. "It will take a very long time for her to get over it, it will take the rest of her life," he said.

McClain said he accepted responsibility for his actions and apologized to the victim and her family. "I'm deeply ashamed of myself, I wish I could take back what I did," he said.

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein called it a "despicable crime." He said that while his sentence wouldn't take away her pain, he was thankful that she had the support of family and friends. "A lot of young people are abused and people don't believe them," he said. "I'm grateful that people are standing by you."

Also Monday, five other people were sentenced on a variety of charges.

Alexa Michele Aldrich, 39, of Niles, pleaded guilty to possession of cocaine and was sentenced to 150 days in jail with credit for 14 days served and $198 in fines and costs.


ALDRICH

CLEMONS

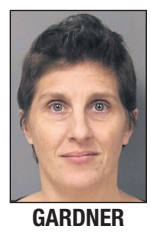
The incident occurred March 4 in Niles. Aldrich faces charges in other counties and can serve the jail term in any Michigan penal institution.

An Indiana man involved in a September breaking and entering incident was given probation and jail. His co-defendant was sentenced last week to jail.

Ronald Floyd Clemons, 40, of Topeka, Indiana, pleaded guilty to breaking and entering a building with intent to commit larceny and was sentenced to two years probation, 150 days in jail with credit for 67 days served, $1,275 in restitution and $658 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Sept. 19 in Niles.

Summer Marie Gardner, 45, of Kalamazoo, pleaded guilty to use of methamphetamine and retain/use a financial transaction device without consent and was sentenced to concurrent jail terms of 90 days and 120 days and has credit for 55 days served. She must pay $248 in fines and costs.


GARDNER

The incident occurred April 21 in Niles Township. She can also serve the jail sentence in any Michigan penal institution.

Darylando Lawrence Norman, 50, of South Bend, pleaded guilty to attempted carrying a concealed weapon and use of cocaine and was sentenced to credit for one day served, $308 in fines and costs and forfeiture of the weapon.

The incident occurred Dec. 26, 2024 in Niles Township.

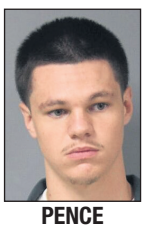
Haydn Edward-Dean Simon, 21, of Buchanan, pleaded guilty to attempted resisting and obstructing police and driving with a suspended license and was sentenced to credit for one year probation, two days served, 80 hours of community service and $1,830 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Sept. 1 in Buchanan Township.

Reese Pence trial to begin next week

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

NILES — The youth accused in a 2022 Niles homicide is scheduled to go on trial next week on murder and other charges after the final status conference passed Monday without a resolution to the case.


PENCE

Reese David Pence, 20, formerly of Dowagiac and Niles, is charged with open murder, carrying a concealed weapon, concealing or possession of a stolen motor vehicle and use of a weapon in the commission of a felony.

He faces a maximum of life in prison if convicted of murder, five years on the weapon and stolen vehicle charges and a consecutive two year term for the felony firearm. He is in jail in lieu of $2 million cash or surety bond.

The trial in Berrien County Trial Court before Judge Gordon Hosbein at the Niles courthouse is set to start Dec. 3 with jury selection. The trial is expected to last at least three days.

Pence appeared in court Monday for the second week in a row. While he refused to speak last Monday, he did speak briefly at Monday's status conference to say that the proceedings against him were unlawful.

Judge Hosbein responded that the proceedings were not unlawful and noted that Pence is already serving a 120 year prison term in Indiana for a separate murder.

The judge called Pence's refusal to speak the previous week "a ruse" as he would communicate with deputies and jail personnel but not in court. He added that Pence isn't required to speak and has been exercising his right to remain silent.

Monday, Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch said she had offered Pence and his attorney a deal in which he would plead guilty to first degree murder and that the prosecutor's office wouldn't seek a life without parole sentence. That offer has now been rescinded.

Koch said she will now seek a life without parole sentence if Pence is convicted of first degree murder at trial. As Pence was a teen when the incident occurred, he would be subject to a Miller hearing which governs how teens convicted of first degree murder are sentenced.

The incident occurred May 12, 2022 at the Arbor Trails apartment complex on North Fifth Street in Niles. Police received numerous calls of a shooting that night in the complex.

Witnesses reported that four teenagers were walking outside one of the buildings when a pickup truck pulled up and a person wearing a red ski mask got out. He confronted the four teens and a fistfight ensued before he allegedly pulled out a gun and fired three times.

The court records indicated that a 14 year old juvenile, Gavin Blankenship, was shot and later died from his injuries.

Pence was brought back to Michigan from Indiana in August. He has been serving prison terms at the Miami Correctional Facility for two Indiana murders also in 2022.

He was convicted in 2023 for the murders of two Niles women at an apartment complex north of South Bend. He received sentences of 55 years in prison on each count plus an additional 12.5 years in prison on each count for the use of a firearm in the commission of the murders.

Pence has also accumulated additional felony charges since being in the Berrien County Jail. He faces five felonies from incidents in September at the jail, including four counts of resisting and obstructing police and one count of assault of a prison employee. Those charges are being handled in St. Joseph.

Dowagiac man sentenced to jail, probation for The Twirl robbery

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

CASSOPOLIS — A Dowagiac man who robbed the Cassopolis Tastee Twirl shop last February was sentenced to jail and probation Friday in Cass County Circuit Court.

Mathew Aaron Crider, 39, of Maple Street in Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to unarmed robbery as a habitual offender and was sentenced to three years probation, 365 days in jail with credit for 268 days served and $2,128 in fines and costs.

CRIDER

The incident occurred Feb. 14 at the Cassopolis Tastee Twirl on Broadway in Cassopolis. He entered the shop which was closed for renovations and assaulted and robbed the owner.

He also pleaded guilty to a probation violation from a 2023 conviction for possession of methamphetamine. His probation was revoked in that case and he was sentenced to 365 days in jail with credit for 268 days served.

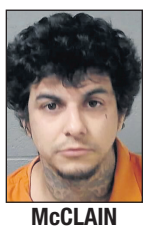
Cass County Prosecutor Victim Fitz noted that Crider has a considerable record with six prior felony and 12 prior misdemeanor convictions. He said his office had secured the agreement with Crider's attorney after consulting the victim in the case.

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman noted that Crider is digging himself a deep hole. "The prosecutor agreed to a one year jail term even though you could go to prison for 12 years," the judge said.

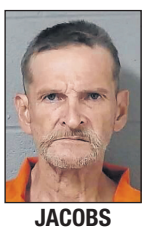
"If you violate this time, you will more likely be in your 50s when you have a chance for parole," he added. "If you want to throw away the next 10, 11 or 12 years of your life, that's what we're looking at here today. It's going to take some real deep soul searching and commitment on your part."

A Dowagiac man is going to prison after violating his probation from a 2024 second degree criminal sexual conduct conviction. Trent Aaron Conrad, 23, homeless and formerly of Dowagiac, was sentenced to 36 months to 15 years in prison with credit for 90 days already served.

CONRAD


McCLAIN

HIGGINS


JACOBS

INGOLD

This was at least the fourth time since August that he has been in court for the probation violation with Judge Herman debating his future. In previous court appearances, Conrad had been sentenced to prison and then given a chance to attend a treatment program which ended up having its funding cut.

Fitz said that all the available options have been explored besides a prison sentence. He noted that Conrad had had multiple violations of his probation over the last year.

A homeless man who was found with methamphetamine at the Cassopolis Biggby Coffee shop was sentenced to probation.

Andres Contreras McClain, 30, pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 82 days served and $2,268 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred July 27 in Cassopolis. Police were called on reports of an unwanted person in the shop who was asleep in a chair. Police found a meth pipe on McClain after searching and arresting him.

McClain is currently in the St. Joseph County, Ind. Jail on a separate charge. "You've spent six years of your adult life in jail or prison," Judge Herman said. "Is this what you want your life to be for the rest of your life? I hope not. You can't change the past but you can change the future."

"You're going to need to make some serious changes or spend a lot of time behind bars," he added. "There are potential prison guidelines here and the next time it will be mandatory prison."

An Elkhart man had his drunk driving conviction entered after failing a delayed sentencing probation.

Alonzo D. Higgins, 62, of Elkhart, had his third offense drunk driving conviction entered and was sentenced to an additional two years probation and 30 days in jail with credit for two days served. He can serve his remaining jail term on weekends.

The incident occurred June 24, 2024 in Dowagiac.

In other sentencings:

Carl Richard Jacobs, 59, of M-51, Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and was sentenced to 12 months probation, credit for 72 days served and $1,968 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Aug. 10 in Dowagiac.

Brandon Lee Ingold, 35, of Three Rivers, pleaded guilty to possession of analogues, possession of a weapon by a prohibited person and possession of ammunition by a prohibited person and was sentenced to concurrent terms of 365 days in jail with credit for 200 days served and $2,184 in fines and costs. The incident occurred May 6 in Cassopolis.

IN BRIEF

Man killed in mobile home fire

EDWARDSBURG — An Edwardsburg man was killed in a mobile home fire Thursday morning, according to the Edwardsburg Fire Department.

At approximately 3 a.m. Thursday, the Edwardsburg Fire Department was dispatched to a reported structure fire involving a mobile home near Painter Lake. Initial reports indicated a possible occupant still inside the residence.

Edwardsburg Fire units arrived on scene within seven minutes, finding the home fully engulfed in flames. Firefighters were able to bring the blaze under control. During the subsequent search of the structure, crews located a single occupant who was later determined to be deceased.

The Edwardsburg Fire Department was assisted by the Cass County Sheriff's Office, Michigan State Police Fire Investigation Unit, and SMCAS Ambulance. A full investigation is underway.

The victim's identity is being withheld pending notification of family.

Search warrant leads to stolen property arrest

CALVIN TOWNSHIP — A theft investigation led to the arrest of a 55-year-old Cass County man Tuesday evening in Calvin Township, according to the Cass County Drug Enforcement Team. At approximately 6 p.m. Tuesday, detectives conducted a search warrant in the 60000 block of Eagle Point Road in Calvin Township on a tip of possible stolen property.

During the execution of that search warrant, numerous items of stolen property were discovered as well as meth and a large quantity of marijuana. A 55-year-old male was arrested with several charges being sought: possession of drugs with the intent to deliver, possession of meth, maintaining a drug house, possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony, possession of stolen property, operating a chop shop, and altering or removing a Vehicle Identification Number.

The name of the defendant will be withheld until after arraignment.

The Cass County Sheriff's Office was assisted by the Cass County Drug Enforcement Team, the Cass County Animal Control Agency, SMCAS Ambulance Service, True's Towing and Wallace Towing. Anyone with information related to this case is asked to contact the Cass County Sheriff's office Tip Line at 1 (800) 462-9328 or the Cass County Drug Enforcement Team at 269-782-5206.

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Photo provided

ReddHill Electronics and Games, formerly the Radio Shack of Niles, at 105 East Main Street, is giving customers and anyone else who wants to help the chance to give local children and teens a fun gift for the holiday season.

ReddHill Electronics and Games hosts holiday fundraiser

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
For Leader Publications

NILES — A downtown Niles game store is embarking on an effort to give back to families with less this holiday season.

ReddHill Electronics and Games, formerly the Radio Shack of Niles, at 105 East Main Street, is giving customers and anyone else who wants to help the chance to give local children and teens a fun gift for the holiday season.

Through rounding up at check out or simply donating any desired dollar amount, customers can give to a fund created by the store that will be offered to families who may not be able to afford gifts for children.

"I'd like to raise enough to help a couple of families," said owner, Dylan Roberts.

Dylan's own family struggled financially when he was a child. He recalls missing out on toys or games, rarely receiving such gifts and usually only through the assistance of social services or businesses and others who showed kindness to his family. He wants to return those acts now that he is a business owner by giving to children and teenagers.

"I grew up poor," he said. "We didn't always get the Christmas we saw other people have. I want them to be able to get cool stuff and have fun."

Reddhill offers a variety of card and board games, including Dungeons and Dragons, Pokemon, Magic: The Gathering, and Warhammer. They also offer dice, gaming supplies, LEGO kits, 3D printing supplies & services and other elements of "nerd culture."

According to Roberts, he offers a variety of pricing, so the gifts need not be lavish in order to give each child a fun holiday.

"Kids just want stuff to open," he said.

The focus at the moment is raising money, with the store offering use of the funds closer to Christmas. Anyone can donate, whether they are a customer or simply interested in helping out.

"The Niles community gets it," said Roberts. "If you want to do something good and you have the means to, help out."

Roberts expects he will work with local organizations to help find the families in need once he has raised enough money, but he's also open to families just coming into the store. He doesn't plan to ask questions, operating on an honor system.

"Some people have a shame seeking help in an official way," said Roberts."This is a low key way for people to just get help they need."

Further details will depend on how much the store can raise, but Roberts is already considering the potential for having enough to roll the money over into next year and keep an ongoing fund.

After four months since the transition from a Radio Shack to a game store, he has witnessed how the gaming culture can bring people together. The shop looks more like a full game store every day, with less of the electronic product visible and walls filled with board game boxes, cards, and supplies. Roberts is still adjusting hours to meet the needs of the gaming community

"It feels right," Roberts said of the transition. "People are responding really well and they are developing a nice little community. People are digging it, man."

Those interested in donating can stop in the store on Main Street or reach out on the Reddhill Electronics & Games Facebook page.

SCHOOLS

From page A1

initiative, donating playground equipment, and assisting with other causes in the schools. The Leep family were credited with funding a new sound system for the performing arts center, which is in the process of being installed and the Wood Foundation was thanked for their work with the Parent Teacher Organization in raising funds to provide safety locks for use during school lockdowns for all classrooms in the district.

The board also honored Administrative Assistant Jill Anderson for her work at Edwardsburg Intermediate School. She received multiple nominations, one of which referred to Jill as "the glue that holds our school together."

The board also received a School Improvement Update and voted to approve Section 31aa Funding, a grant for school safety and mental health initiatives.

The final regular school board meeting of the year will take place Monday Dec. 15 in the Performing Arts Center.

Buchanan officials praise streetscape project

By DEBRA HAIGHT
For Leader Publications

Don Campbell / Paxton Media Group

Buchanan Mayor Mark Weedon speaks during a ribbon cutting held Friday morning to celebrate the completion of the downtown Buchanan project.

BUCHANAN — Buchanan city officials were still basking in the glow Monday night from last Friday's downtown re-opening. A nearly $20 million infrastructure and streetscape project had closed downtown streets for several months.

Monday's Buchanan City Commission meeting featured comments from both commissioners and residents about the new downtown. Front Street opened to traffic over the weekend with only smaller items left to do between now and the spring.

Jackie Bartus thanked city staff, contractors and businesses for all their hard work. "I'm excited to have the downtown open again," she said.

For their part, commissioners all expressed thanks for all the work that's been done as well as people's patience over the last several months. "What a great couple of days," Commissioner Larry Money said. "Streets are open to traffic, people can park on Front Street and the American flag is back up over Front Street."

"We've had many months of dirt roads and holes in the street large enough to lose a car in," he added. "We had a great turnout Friday. The city staff and citizens persevered and made the best of a bad situation. We should be back to normal."

"We made it, Friday was absolutely amazing to see all the smiling faces and all the excitement," Buchanan Mayor Mark Weedon said. "I can't keep myself from going down there and we aren't all the way done yet. We have a lot of great things ahead of us. In three to five years, you won't recognize the city."

Also Monday, City Manager Tony McGhee announced that the city will soon have a new city planner. He has been interviewing candidates since Rich Murphy left the position in September.

McGhee said that current St. Joseph Community Development Director and Zoning Administrator Kristen Gundersen will be starting her new duties in Buchanan Dec. 15. He wouldn't give her exact salary, only saying that is between $78,500 and $95,000.

He noted that Gundersen is a Niles native, graduate of Michigan State University and worked at locations in Illinois before taking the St. Joseph position 10 years ago.

Commissioners approved a new zoning ordinance after holding two public hearings that drew no comments. The updated ordinance is called a "unified development code" and is "form based" rather than "traditional use based." It balances growth with preservation with an emphasis on encouraging compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development.

In other action, the commission held a first public hearing on city election filing deadlines and will hold a second hearing Jan. 12. If passed, it will change the filing deadline for city elections. City Clerk Kalla Langston-Weiss said the change will restore the filing deadline back to the 15th Tuesday prior to the August election rather than the 15th Tuesday before the November election.

Langston-Weiss and Commissioner Dan Vigansky said that the filing deadline had been the earlier date up until 2018 when city commissioners made the change to the later date. Langston-Weiss said the earlier deadline allows the city to have a primary in August if more than twice the number of candidates as open terms apply to run.

Commissioners also held a public hearing on the sale of city owned lots primarily on the city's north side. No comments were received and commissioners later approved the sale of the lots.

BUCHANAN

From page A1

of strong communities like Buchanan to the future strength of the state. "You have built something extraordinary that honors the past and embraces the future," she said.

Valarie Handy of the United States Department of Agriculture and Lee Belding representing U.S. Rep. Tim Walberg also spoke. Handy called the project "transformational," while Belding said that the project has been a testament to the hard work of city officials. "When small communities thrive, the nation thrives," he said.

The $19.4 million project began in the spring and saw underground infrastructure replaced and upgraded. In addition, the downtown streetscape has been totally revamped with the new roads built in a tabletop design that creates a flexible area that can easily convert roadways into a plaza space for festivals and community events.

While the downtown wasn't open for vehicular traffic Friday, city officials said that streets were scheduled to be open for cars and trucks this weekend or early next week. The final touches of the streetscape project are expected to be completed next spring.

Don Campbell / Paxton Media Group

A ribbon cutting is held Nov. 21 to celebrate the completion of the downtown Buchanan project.

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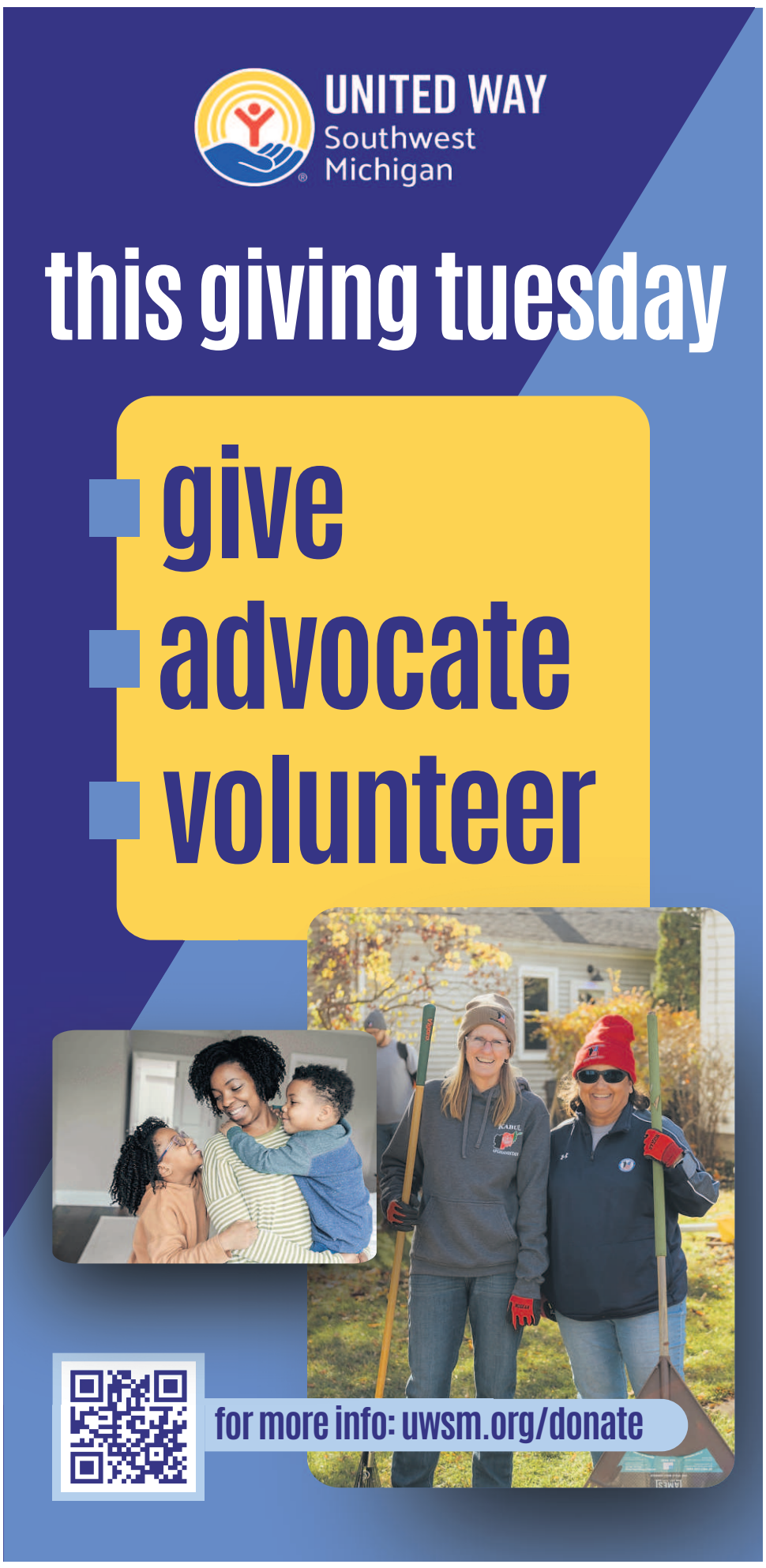

Sports

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Nick Shelton / For Leader Publications

Junior running back Jeremiyah Love has been named as a finalist for the Maxwell Award, honoring the collegiate football player of the year.

Love selected as finalist for Maxwell Award

NOTRE DAME ATHLETICS

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Junior running back Jeremiyah Love earned his second national finalist honor Tuesday, named as a finalist for the Maxwell Award, honoring the collegiate football player of the year.

Love is one of three finalists, and the only non-quarterback on the list. Love is also a finalist for the Doak Walker Award, which honors the nation's best running back.

Notre Dame players have won the Maxwell Award on seven occasions: TE Leon Hart (1949), HB John Lattner (1952, 1953), LB Jim Lynch (1966), DE Ross Browner (1977), QB Brady Quinn (2006) and LB Manti Te'o (2012).

This season, Love has posted 185 rushes for 1,306 yards and 17 touchdowns, adding 26 receptions for 274 yards and three touchdowns. He averages 7.1 yards per rush on the season. Already having eclipsed 1,000 rushing yards for the season, he's just the sixth player in Notre Dame history to have multiple 1,000-yard rushing seasons and the first since Kyren Williams (2020, 2021).

Love averages 118.7 rushing yards per game, and he is the only player in the country to average over 100 yards per game and average over seven yards per carry (Love is at 7.1). Love has posted six 100+ yard rushing games this season.

Love ranks second in the nation in scoring (10.9), total points (120), total touchdowns (20), third in rushing touchdowns (17), rushing yards (1,306), rushing yards per game (118.7), fourth in rush yards per carry (7.06) and fourth in all-purpose yards (143.64).

Love posted eight carries for 171 yards and three touchdowns in the 70-7 win over Syracuse, averaging 21.4 yards per carry. He is

See **LOVE**, page B2

Fears' 19 leads No. 11 MSU past No. 18 North Carolina 74-58

MSU ATHLETICS

FORT MYERS, Fla. – Redshirt sophomore guard Jeremy Fears Jr. scored 19 points and handed out seven assists to lead four players in double figures as No. 11 Michigan State beat No. 18 North Carolina, 74-58, in the second round of the Fort Myers Tip-Off at Suncoast Credit Union Arena on Thanksgiving Day.

Fears scored 15 of his career-high 19 points in the second half as MSU out-scored the Tar Heels, 41-30, in the second half and held them to a season-low 58 points.

Senior forward Jaxon Kohler had his third double-double of the season with 10 points and 11 rebounds, senior center Carson Cooper scored 14 points and had six rebounds and freshman forward Cam Ward added 11 points off the bench.

After a back-and-forth first half with two ties and 10 lead changes, Michigan State went into the break with a 33-28 lead.

The Spartans never trailed in the second half and extended their lead to nine points, 53-46, on a 3-pointer from Kohler with 11:47 left in the game.

North Carolina pulled to within three points, 55-52, on a layup from Kyan Evans with 8:48 left and MSU responded with a 9-0 run over 2:13 and extended the lead to 64-52 when Fears fed Cooper for a layup with 5:17 to play, forcing the Tar Heels to call a timeout.

North Carolina twice got within 10 points but Fears, who scored eight of MSU's last 14 points, hit a layup with 4:26 left to push it back to 66-54 and Carr grabbed an offensive rebound and scored on a put-back dunk with 2:59 left to make it 68-56. Fears hit a pair of free throws with 2:14 left and closed out the scoring with a pair of jumpers in the final minute as the Spartans captured the 74-58 win.

Michigan State improves to 7-0 this season, wrapping up the first undefeated November for the Spartans since the 2015-16 season, while North Carolina falls to 6-1.

Scott Hassinger / For Leader Publications

The 2025 Wolverine Conference's Coach of the Year recipients for the Fall Sports season. Pictured left to right are, Niles football coach Scot Shaw; Steve Long, Otsego girls' cross country; Michael Miller, Otsego girls' golf; Sarah Strefling, Edwardsburg girls' volleyball; Jason Muckel, Three Rivers boys' cross country; Sean Jesse, Edwardsburg boys' soccer and Nick Foley, Vicksburg boys' tennis.

Area coaches honored at 2025 Wolverine Conference Banquet

By SCOTT HASSINGER
For Leader Publications

KALAMAZOO — High school coaches from Niles and Edwardsburg were among several individuals honored Thursday night at the 2025 Wolverine Conference Banquet held at the Fetzer Center on the Western Michigan University campus.

Matt Brawley, Niles' athletic director, served as host of the event and Gary Ellis filled the role of Master of Ceremonies as the league celebrated its 74th year of existence.

"Typically and rightfully so, our usual focus is on the kids, but tonight we turn the spotlight on and celebrate those who help provide opportunities for our student-athletes to grow in so many different ways," Ellis said.

Ellis kicked off the evening's events by introducing the 2025 Distinguished Service Award recipients. That trio included Warren Offord Jr.; Christine Martin and Tim Baker.

A welcome to the evening program was then extended by Thomas Reed, President of the Wolverine Conference Board of Governors.

Ellis also highlighted some of the top moments for the league in 2025, which included Sturgis winning a Division 1 girls' track and field state championship; Three Rivers' wrestling team reaching the Division 2 state team semifinals; Vicksburg winning its first regional championship in football in school history and Otsego's Emma Hoffman becoming the first female runner from the conference to end the cross country season as a state champion.

Other big accomplishments during the year came from Zach Overmyer of Edwardsburg who captured a Division 2 state title in the high jump in boys' track and field and the Paw Paw girls' softball team finished as Division 2 state runners-up. Three Rivers' bowling team reached the semifinals and the Lady Wildcats were state bowling quarterfinalists. Vicksburg's Jorden Butler was the state champion in boys' singles in bowling. Madison Nieuweheis of Plainwell won a girls' state wrestling title as well.

Following dinner and dessert served by WMU's Brown and Gold Restaurant, the 2025 Coach of the Year Awards were announced and presented by Reed.

See **COACHES**, page B2

Cassopolis' Heiman signs with SMC volleyball

By SMC ATHLETICS

DOWAGIAC — Jordin Heiman of Cassopolis Ross Beatty High School and NIVA Volleyball Club has signed with Southwestern Michigan College to play with the Roadrunners starting in Fall 2026.

Heiman earned First Team All-Southwest 10 honors and helped lead her team to a conference championship.

"Jordin Heiman is a fierce attacker and competitor," said SMC Coach Jenny Nate. "She can put the ball away, sees the court well, has multiple offensive shots, and is a quick, smart player who prepares to win. We are excited to welcome Jordin to SMC Volleyball and continue to put our focus on outstanding, local athletes who will help us keep building a championship-caliber winning program on the court, in the classroom, and in our community."

"Jordin hits a heavy ball," added Cassopolis Coach Linda Martin.

See **HEIMAN**, page B2

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COACHES

From page B1

Recognized as Coach of the Year for the 2025 Winter Sports season were Aaron Beery, Paw Paw boys' basketball; Vicksburg's Tim Kirby, girls basketball; Steve Harman of Edwardsburg, boys' bowling; Kim Grinnage of Edwardsburg, girls' bowling; Plainwell's Kylie Cook, competitive cheer; and Three Rivers' Jeff Smith in wrestling.

Harman was named Coach of the Year after leading the Eddies to their first Wolverine Conference bowling championship. Meanwhile, Grinage was responsible for leading Edwardsburg's girls' team to its best league finish in school history. The Lady Eddies also sent two athletes to the state meet for the first time ever.

Recipients from the 2025 Spring Sports season included Niles baseball coach Jim Brawley; Otsego boys' golf coach Matt Rayman; Otsego girls' soccer coach Levi Butcher; Paw Paw girls' softball coach Mike Mottl; Edwardsburg girls' tennis coach Kim Bartz; Three Rivers boys' track and field coach Jason Muckel and Sturgis girls' track and field coach Leslie Starkey.

Brawley, who has coached high school baseball for six years, including the last three at Niles, has won five conference titles, three district titles, two regional crowns and a state championship when he served as Buchanan's head coach.

"We have a lot of great kids returning from a good team last season who have a good work ethic. I have a great coaching staff and we are blessed with a great situation here at Niles. Our pitchers threw strikes last year and defensively we were strong thanks to my son Andrew Brawley who works well with our infielders. We will have a strong lineup at the plate too this coming season," said Niles' baseball coach.

Niles recently had two senior players sign to play Division I baseball. they include Brendan Olsen (University of Houston) and Jason Raacht (Youngstown State).

Bartz, who retired as Edwardsburg's head coach last spring after 30 seasons, not only guided the Lady Eddies to its first Wolverine Conference title in girls' tennis, but also also to the state tournament in her final season at the helm.

"We had a good group of nine seniors who showed excellent leadership. They had a great work ethic and were dedicated to getting better during the offseason. Also they were just really good friends and our upperclassmen did a nice job of bringing the younger kids along," Bartz said.

The 2024 Fall Sports Coaches were then honored. They included Niles head football coach Scot Shaw; Muckel in boys' cross country; Otsego girls' cross country coach Steve Long; Otsego girls' golf coach Michael Miller; Sean Jesse of Edwardsburg in boys' soccer; Nick Foley of Vicksburg in boys' tennis and Sarah Strefling from Edwardsburg in girls' volleyball.

Shaw, whose 2024 squad finished Division 4 state runners-up, earned his third Coach of the Year Award since taking over the Vikings' fortunes five years ago. He guided the Vikings to an unbeaten 9-0 regular season and a berth in the Division 3 state playoffs where Niles lost to defending state champion Zeeland West.

"Our Seniors have been the cornerstone of our program and a big part of what we've established here at Niles. We are going to miss this group and they played a great deal of football. I'm so proud of the leadership and work ethic they've shown in putting Niles football on the map," Shaw said. "It's really awesome to see how much pride they've taken in building a strong tradition here."

Jesse, who just completed his 34th season coaching soccer, guided Edwardsburg to a historical season which saw the Eddies finish with a school record win-loss mark of 17-2-1, including earning the school's first regional win in school history before falling to Hudsonville Unity Christian 4-1 in the regional championship match.

"We had a fantastic year. It's nice that the Wolverine Conference holds a banquet like this to honor our coaches. With the team I had this year, I just had to steer them in the right direction. The family atmosphere that we developed this year is what we were most proud of with this team. Our favorite moment was overcoming St. Joseph to win the district title after losing to them earlier in the season," Jesse said.

Strefling guided Edwardsburg's volleyball squad to a 30-10 record before seeing its season end with a heartbreaking loss in five sets to Niles in the district championship. The Lady Eddies were led by its pair of senior Division I recruits Sarah Pippin (Valparaiso University) and Mya Eberlein (Eastern Michigan University).

Edwardsburg was ranked all season long among the top 10 in the Division 2 Michigan Interschlastic Volleyball Coaches Association state rankings.

"It was a competitive team that played a really competitive schedule. This group developed a great culture and that led to our determination to win," Strefling said.

On hand to present the Mike Foster Twenty-Five Year Service Award was Foster himself, an athlete, athletic director and league secretary at four different league schools. The 2025 recipients for the award included Scott Evans of Plainwell who has coached Trojans' track for 20 years. Also honored with the same award was Plainwell's Chris Taylor who has spent 25 years coaching football at various levels during his career at Plainwell.

Presentations were then made for the 2025 Distinguished Service Awards.

Offord served for 52 years as a varsity boys' and girls' tennis coach at Wolverine Conference member schools Paw Paw and Vicksburg. He was named 2025 Conference and Regional Coach of the Year in his final season with the girls' program at Vicksburg before retiring this past Spring. He also served many years as a registered basketball and volleyball official with the Michigan High School Athletic Association.

Baker, a retired football coach and teacher from the Constantine school district, served as a registered basketball official with the MHSAA for 43 years. During that period, Baker officiated three state championship games and seven semifinal contests. He remains active as an official MHSAA starter for track and field and cross county meets. He coached the 2004 Constantine football team to a Division 6 state championship.

Martin spent 25 years in the role of Athletic Administrative Assistant at Paw Paw High School. During that time, Martin served as a mentor to countless other athletic administrative assistants. She also served her community as a youth sports coach.

A slide presentation on each Distinguished Service Award recipient was shown to the large audience in attendance. Each recipient then addressed the crowd with a short speech.

Michigan cruises past Gonzaga to claim Players Era title

MICHIGAN ATHLETICS

Michigan Athletics

Morez Johnson Jr. dunks a basketball.

LAS VEGAS, Nev. —The seventh-ranked University of Michigan men's basketball team used an overwhelming offensive output to coast in a 101-61 victory over No. 12 Gonzaga in the Players Era Festival title game. The triumph inside the MGM Grand Garden Arena on Wednesday night (Nov. 26) served as Michigan's fourth-straight 20-plus-point win — its second straight over a ranked opponent.

A total of 11 Wolverines made scoring contributions, tied for the most in a game this season, including five double-digit scorers. The loss was Gonzaga's first of the season and its first 40-point loss in 35 years.

Tournament MVP Yaxel Lendeborg's 20 points and 11 rebounds were game highs, while Aday Mara and Morez Johnson Jr. rounded out the Wolverine frontcourt with 13 and 11 points, respectively. The trio also combined for seven blocks, tied for the most in a game this year.

Nimari Burnett was a perfect 4-for-4 from deep, finishing with 14 points to go along with six boards. Trey McKenney had the game's second-highest total with 15, shooting 5-of-7 from the field and 3-of-5 from long range to round out Michigan's double-figure scorers.

Elliot Cadeau posted 13 assists – the second time this year he has had 13 helpers or more in a game – tied for the seventh most in a single game in program history.

The Wolverines jumped on the Bulldogs (7-1) early, using six of Lendeborg's 15 first-half points in a 13-3 run to open the contest.

U-M only missed two of its first 12 field goals while opening a 28-8 advantage seven minutes in, and back-to-back treys from McKenney and Burnett pushed the lead to 19 at the 10-minute mark.

Michigan held Gonzaga scoreless for the final 3:31 of the half while pouring in nine consecutive points. The Wolverines headed to the break with a 53-29 edge, shooting 61 percent (19-for-31) from the field and 57 percent (8-for-14) from long range, while limiting the Tigers to their lowest-scoring half of the season.

Michigan (7-0) blocked three Gonzaga layups and forced a turnover to open the second half where it left off in the first. A 15-2 scoring run pushed the U-M lead to 35 points, 72-37, with 12:51 remaining as four Wolverines entered double-figures before the halfway point of the second stanza.

An emphatic Lendeborg slam and a McKenney three asserted a 40-point lead, 83-43, at the 9:20 mark, and after three dunks and a pair of triples, Michigan continued to string together highlight reel baskets en route to the Players Era Championship.

The Maize and Blue returns to the Crisler Center on Dec. 6 at 4 p.m. to host Rutgers.

WMU beats EMU, clinches MAC title berth

By WMU ATHLETICS

Kimberly Moss / WMU Athletics

The Western Michigan football team clinched its spot in the 2025 Mid-American Conference Championship Game after downing Eastern Michigan 31-21 at Rynearson Stadium on Tuesday night.

YPSILANTI — The Western Michigan football team clinched its spot in the 2025 Mid-American Conference Championship Game after downing Eastern Michigan 31-21 at Rynearson Stadium on Tuesday night.

Eastern Michigan struck first with a touchdown in the first quarter, but the Broncos scored 31 straight points and forced five turnovers to punch their ticket to the team's fourth MAC Championship game in program history.

MAC Championship tickets will go on sale beginning at noon on Wednesday, Nov. 26. To order, visit www.wmubroncos.com or call 1-888-4-WMU-TIX. Western Michigan students will be able to claim a FREE ticket to the game through your WMU Student Ticket Account.

Redshirt sophomore quarterback Broc Lowry rushed for 92 yards and two touchdowns, while passing for 100 yards. Jalen Buckley had 70 yards on 16 carries and a touchdown, while Tailique Williams had a career-high 67 yards and a rushing touchdown.

Aaron Wofford, Joey Pope and Sefa Saipaia Jr. all recorded interceptions, while Nadame Tucker had a strip sack. Tate Hallock led the Broncos with seven tackles and had a forced fumble that resulted in a 35-yard return by John Peters.

The MAC Championship game is set for Saturday, Dec. 6 at 12 p.m. on ESPN. WMU's opponent is still to be determined with the rest of the MAC completing the regular season on Friday and Saturday.

Notre Dame falls 66-56 to No. 3 Houston

NOTRE DAME ATHLETICS

LAS VEGAS — The Notre Dame men's basketball team didn't capture an upset victory against one of the top teams in the country on Wednesday at the Players Era, but they definitely lived up to their moniker and displayed some tremendous fight in the second half against No. 3 Houston (7-1). The Fighting Irish (5-3) fell into a 22-point hole in the first half after a cold shooting start, but rallied to make it a four point ballgame with 10.5 minutes remaining in the game.

The commonality between the Kansas loss and this one was that the threes weren't falling. Versus Kansas, Notre Dame was 4-24, and against Houston, the Irish were 6-28.

Markus Burton led Notre Dame in scoring for all three games in Vegas, including today in which he dropped 19 points on 6-14 shooting. Burton grabbed a season high seven rebounds and tied his season high of five assists.

Over the three Players Era games, Burton averaged 21.3 ppg on 53.3 percent shooting. He recorded 16 rebounds, 11 assists and six steals.

Freshman Jalen Haralson kept his double-digit scoring streak alive with 14 on Wednesday. The guard was 4-8 from the field and 6-8 from the free-throw line.

Junior Logan Imes supplied great minutes as well, leading the way in the +/- category at +10.

Notre Dame started a cold 2-13 from the field, while Houston opened 7-14 shooting to explode out to a 16-2 lead.

Houston's Emmanuel Sharp and Milos Uzan led the barrage, each totaling 11 points in the first half, each converting three triples. The Cougars lead grew as large as 22, up 29-7 at 7:49.

The Irish had a late first half charge, outscoring Houston 18-10 for the remainder of the first half. Haralson scored five straight from the stripe; then, Certa and Burton and Imes each knocked down threes. All-in-all, the Irish cut it to 25-39 at halftime.

The Fighting Irish return home to Purcell Pavilion to host its first ACC/SEC Challenge game. The Mizzou Tigers come to South Bend on Tuesday, Dec. 2, for a 9 p.m. ET tip on ESPNU.

LOVE

From page B1

just the third player since 1996 to have 170 or more rushing yards and three touchdowns on eight carries or less (Clyde Edwards-Helaire, 11/23/19 vs. Arkansas and Desmond Ridder, 10/24/20 vs. SMU).

This season, Love was named the Associated Press National Player of the Week and the Doak Walker National Running Back of the Week for his impressive performance against No. 20 USC.

Love racked up 228 rushing yards on 24 carries to average 9.5 yards per carry in a 34-24 win over USC in the Jeweled Shillelagh rivalry contest. The 228 rushing yards Love put up against USC are the most for a Notre Dame player in a single game in Notre Dame Stadium's 513-game history.

His 20 touchdowns this season tie with Jerome Bettis (1991) for the most in a single season in Notre Dame history. His 17 rushing touchdowns are the second-most in school history for a single season.

HEIMAN

From page B1

"She has great court sense and intensity. We struggled to replace her as a passer and hitter upon injury. She is motivated to improve every day. SMC is a great place for athletes to play high-level volleyball."

Heiman joins Ava Nate of Dowagiac, Maddie Zache of Niles and teammate Tori Burks of Cassopolis in the 2026 SMC Volleyball recruiting class.

SMC Volleyball finished a memorable 2025 season with an impressive 29-9 record. The Roadrunners won the MCCAA Western Conference with an 11-1 mark, finished third in the entire MCCAA and qualified as the No. 2 seed in the Great Lakes District Tournament. SMC went 3-2 in the B bracket, finishing as runners-up to the No. 1 seed.

Individual Roadrunners earned 16 conference and regional awards, including All-Freshman Team, All-Conference Honorable Mention, Second Team All-Conference, First Team All-Conference, All-MCCAA Team, All-Region Team, Player of the Year and Coach of the Year.

AUTOMOTIVE

AUTO REVIEWS

2026 Toyota RAV4's rare qualities are what make it so popular

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Toyota / TNS

Twenty-nine years ago, somewhere between the death of the station wagon and the rise of the electric pickup, the RAV4 debuted as an anomaly: a three-door SUV riding atop a car platform, with all-wheel drive and a Patagonia wardrobe. At the time, SUVs were little more than body-on-frame pickup trucks in different attire, with refinement to match. They were truly brutal off-road warriors.

Today, most new SUVs take their cues from the RAV4's trailblazing if well-mannered engineering. That means a unibody car-based platform with some light off-road capability. Once a maverick, the Toyota RAV4 is now mainstream, while such SUV icons as the Jeep Wrangler and Ford Bronco have become the outliers. And for 2026, the Toyota RAV4 has been redesigned as a hybrid or a plug-in hybrid, improbably rendering it a Prius for people who want to look capable. It lets you feel adventurous without ever breaking a sweat.

The standard 2026 Toyota RAV4 hybrid generates a respectable 226 horsepower and, for the first time, can send it all to the front wheels, which makes sense if you live somewhere flat and boring. If you insist on all-wheel-drive, you're rewarded with a whopping 10 extra horses, bringing the total to 236. Need more than that? The plug-in hybrid offers a far healthier 324 horsepower, with an electric-only range of 52 miles, so you can handle most daily driving without ever firing a piston. All-wheel drive remains standard on the plug-in hybrid because Toyota knows you'll tell people you need it, even if you live somewhere with two seasons: summer and road construction.

The 2026 Toyota RAV4 is offered in core LE, XLE and Limited; sporty SE, XSE and GR Sport; and off-road-flavored Woodland. Each of the variants – core, sporty, or off-road – get their own unique proboscis, while all RAV4s get the hybrid powertrain, except for the GR Sport, which comes with the plug-in hybrid. Others get the plug-in as an option. And while the Woodland seems adventurous, it's mostly aggressive wheel arches, off-road tires and a 0.3-inch higher ride height. It's a similar story for the GR Sport. It's connected to Toyota's Gazoo Racing division in the same way your Peloton connects you to actual cycling. Engineers say the GR Sport is more of an introduction to Toyota's GR brand, rather than a hardcore GR vehicle. But it's not unlike making oatmeal taste interesting. Certainly, chief engineer Yoshinori Futonagane had his heart in the right place. He was trying to instill the 2026 Toyota RAV4 with a bit of fun, a task about as difficult as finding a librarian who's wild.

Driving the RAV4 remains largely uneventful, which is part of its allure. It's not that it's dull. It just doesn't insist on being interesting. The steering feels light but accurate, the brakes are confident, and the suspension seems tuned by someone who understands that most of life's adventures involve potholes, not apexes. There's noticeable body lean while cornering, even in the GR Sport. But it's well-controlled and predictable. It's the kind of car that turns down the volume on the modern world.

Its chassis is a modified version of what was used before, but revised for its all-hybrid powertrain. And while it looks familiar, its wardrobe is all-new. Particularly appreciated is hood styling that makes it easy to place the vehicle on the road. It's helped by an instrument panel that's lower than last year, making outward visibility markedly better.

Toyota provided a pre-production unit to test drive, so interior fit and finish is hard to judge. However, the front thrones provide the requisite roominess, while the rear seats have adequate space provided front seat residents are kind to taller rear seat riders. Seats are wide and a bit flat, with modest side bolstering. Uniquely, the center console lid is dual hinged, opening towards either the driver or front-seat passenger. It also lifts entirely, and can be flipped over and secured so that you use its hard underside surface should you need it.

And there are any number of USB-C plugs, dual wireless phone charging, 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, a 10.5-inch infotainment screen or an available 12.9-inch touchscreen run by updated software that makes it one of the best in the business.

You'll never love the 2026 Toyota RAV4 Limited, not the way you loved that Mazda Miata, or that old Jeep Wrangler with the leaky roof. But when you're late for work, the weather's awful, and the world seems to be coming apart at the seams, the 2026 Toyota RAV4 Limited will still be there, ready to deliver you safely to wherever you need to be. And in 2026, that might be the greatest luxury of all: a car that asks for nothing, promises little, and never lets you down. Look for it in showrooms in time for winter.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

2026 Toyota RAV4 Limited AWD

Base price: To be announced

Powertrain: 2.5-liter four-cylinder gas-electric hybrid

Horsepower: 236

EPA rating (combined city/highway): 42 mpg

Fuel required: Regular unleaded

Length/Width/Height: 181/73/67 inches

Ground clearance: 8.1 inches

Payload: 1,075 pounds

Cargo capacity: 38-70 cubic feet

Towing capacity: 3,500 pounds

Stylish Honda Prelude changes gears for new hybrid generation

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

TOCHIGI, Japan — The last manual Honda Prelude Type SH coupe I drove was a 2001 model. Stylish and whip quick, I took it by the scruff of the neck and whipped it around Oakland County, rowing its high-revving VTEC engine with abandon.

The 2026 Honda Prelude is not that vehicle.

The sleek, all-new Prelude, which enthusiasts have been thirsting for since it wowed as a concept at the 2023 Los Angeles Auto Show, is a new coupe for a new Honda generation. It lives up to its name as a gateway to Honda's latest technology.

Where the last-generation Prelude was a performance brand halo pushing engine RPM and suspension limits (alongside the S2000 sports car), Prelude joins a 2026 model lineup already loaded with athletes: the manual pocket-rocket Civic Si and winged Civic Type R hot hatch. The Prelude's mission is less track rat and more grand tourer.

I got a sneak peak of Prelude before it hits dealer lots in January. I flogged it from the streets of Ann Arbor to Honda's test track here in Tochigi north of Tokyo, where the hot hatch proved itself unflappable (if less engaging than its predecessor) with an impressive 500 miles of range.

The 2001 'Lude was a shot of Red Bull; the 2026 model is a tasty latte.

Indeed, with the $42K Prelude and $46K Type R, Honda offers buyers $40K-something performance models with distinctive personalities, not unlike what Corvette has done with its E-Ray grand tourer and Z06 track rat at the, ahem, $110K price point.

Like the Z06 with a Z07 package, Type R lets known its intentions right away with a standard rear wing that arches from its back like a scorpion tail. With muscular fenders, black trim, hood scoop and three tailpipes out back, this Orca is ready to hunt.

Prelude, on the other hand, greets you with a dolphin smile.

Its thin, pleasant front grille integrates with equally thin headlights that sweep backward across a sloped hood. That hood gives way to a long, tapered hatchback making for a classic coupe profile that could pass for a mid-engine sports car. It stopped showgoers in their tracks on the '23 LA Show floor, and my white tester in Ann Arbor was no less grabbing.

A woman staying in Weber's Hotel (where I was testing Prelude for the North American Car of the Year jury) came out the front door and made a beeline for the 'Lude. "I want that car," she exclaimed.

Also like a mid-engine sports car, Prelude's big C-pillar comes with serous visibility issues. Pulling out of Weber's onto Jackson Avenue, the rear blind-spot was, well, blinding. Happily, Prelude comes loaded with safety features including blind-spot assist, adaptive cruise control, auto-braking, and so on. Maybe Honda could option a camera mirror like a Corvette C8?

Coupe also means Prelude's back seat is tougher to access than a Type R – or any other Civic for that matter. There's a reason that niche-coupes Prelude, Honda Accord Coupe, Nissan Altima Coupe, Eagle Talon, Infiniti Q60, Mercury Cougar, Chevy SS and Chevy Camaro have dropped away over the years, leaving few choices like the Prelude, BMW 2-series and Ford Mustang: practicality.

Need to seat four? Child seat access? Take the kids to school? The Prelude coupe is more limited than its sedan brethren, which is why even the former-coupe Civic Si has gone four-door. What Prelude does offer, however, is a huuuuge rear hatchback. Drop the rear seats and it gets even bigger.

For coupe buyers, that practicality will get the attention of, say, $40K Mustang Ecoboost shoppers who want hatchback room and rear seat comfort. The Prelude's five-inch shorter wheelbase than the Type R means just 32 inches of legroom, but that still beats the Ford (and Toyota GR Corolla hot hatch) by three inches.

Prelude doesn't have the pony car's natural rear-wheel-drive athleticism, but it's surprisingly nimble for a front-wheel-drive car because it shares the front suspension and Brembo brakes with the track-tastic Type R. Oooooh.

At the end of a long straight on Honda's Tochigi, Japan, test track, I stomped 'Lude's 'Bos and we rotated nicely into a 90-degree hairpin. Credit torque-vectoring technology that brakes the inside front wheel, say Honda engineers, helping overcome the front-wheel-driver's natural tendency to push. (Hot tip: the formula will get even better in the next-gen Civic, which we had the privilege to test at Tochigi in camouflage.)

In 1997, our colleagues at Car and Driver crowned Prelude the best-handling car under $30,000 ($60K in today's dollars), beating out rear-wheel-drive hotties like the BMW 3-series, Chevrolet Camaro and Mazda Miata thanks to its similarly sophisticated front suspension, high-revving mill and precise manual gearbox.

As the torquey Prelude exited the hairpin turn, I stomped on the right pedal, and ... what's this, no manual?

If you want to row a box, get the Type R or Si. Prelude is here as prelude to Honda's hybrid future. The Japanese brand is going all in on hybrids (like its cross-Tokyo rival Toyota) with a target of being all-EV in 2040. Not only does sixth-gen Prelude not have a manual, it doesn't even have a gearbox, as twin electric motors translate engine power to the wheels like a single-speed EV transmission.

It's a drive system but behaves like an automatic tranmsission with synthetic shifts. Expect a low six-second 0-60 mph dash, which beats a Civic Si (6.6) but trails the 315-horsepower Type R's 4.9 secs, or the 315-horse Mustang Eco-Boost's 4.5.

Honda recognizes the visceral void left by a stick shift, and fills it with ... more tech!

'Lude introduces a nifty feature called S+ Shift – you can't miss the American game-show button in the middle of the console – that is meant to impersonate a geared transmission. Your speed freak reviewer frequently punched the big S+ Shift button.

I'll take SIMULATED ELECTRONIC FEATURES for $42,000, Alex!

S+ Shift nicely approximated an eight-speed gearbox as I tore around the Tochigi Proving Grounds (and Ann Arbor's Huron River Drive). Simulated upshifts were crisp and downshifts were rev-matched like a manual transmission. I used the steering-wheel-mounted paddle shifters, which even simulated bouncing off a rev-limiter if revved to high. Comical that.

Cruising Ann Arbor's morning traffic, I was content with the "trigger-shifter" console shifter ripped right out of Honda's Acura luxury cars. It's another indication of the Prelude's upscale, tech-focused vibe relative to boy toy Type R.

My tester's two-tone salt 'n' pepper cabin echoed that sophistication. Paired with Civic's already appealing honeycomb dash and digital displays, it's an interior where you can comfortably spend hours on the road.

Hours on track? A used, low-mileage 2001 Prelude Type SH stick shift will set you back about $20K.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2026 Honda Prelude
★★★

Vehicle type: Front-wheel-drive, four-passenger sport coupe

Price: $42,000 (est.)

Powerplant: 2.0-liter, inline-4 cylinder mated to two electric motors

Power: 200 horsepower, 232 pound-feet torque

Transmission: Direct drive with S+ Shift

Performance: 0-60 mph, 6.2 seconds (est.); top speed, 126 mph

Weight: NA

Range: EPA est. mpg, NA. Est. 500 mile range.

Report card

Highs: Head turning looks; S+ Shift

Lows: Smaller back seat than Civic; blind spot the size of Rhode Island

Classifieds Marketplace

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0600 REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

Needed Year Round Storage In Niles Area For Car, Motorcycle And Other Garage Items Call: 574-361-2535

0900 LEGALS

Legal Notice
State of Michigan
Creditors Notice

To all creditors both known and unknown of Douglas Ray Smith:

Please take notice that Douglas Ray Smith (D.O.B. 5/18/54), died on October 6, 2025, and lived at 26016 Yankee St., Edwardsburg, MI. A formal probate of their estate will not be opened.

All claims against the estate of Douglas Ray Smith must be presented to the undersigned personal representative within four (4) months from the date of publication of this notice or will be forever barred.

Stacey Tighe
26008 Yankee St.
Edwardsburg, MI 49112

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on December 10, 2025. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information: Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Stanley William Davis, a married man Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns Foreclosing Assignee (if any): PennyMac Loan Services LLC Date of Mortgage: July 23, 2004 Date of Mortgage Recording: July 29, 2004 Amount claimed due on date of notice: $56,079.43 Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in City of Dowagiac, Cass County, Michigan, and described as: Lot(s) 2 of BURMAX PARK, according to the Plat thereof recorded in Liber 1-E of Plats, Page(s) 271 of Cass County Records. Common street address (if any): 27919 Burmax Park, Dowagiac, MI 49047-9644 The redemption period shall be 1 year from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.

This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: November 8, 2025
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145, Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1576401 (11-08)(11-29)

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2025-0847-DE-M

Court address:
811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085
Court phone no.
269-983-7111

Estate of Ruth L. Aldridge, deceased
Date of birth: 12/17/1950

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Ruth L. Aldridge, died 10/01/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Laura A. Sadowsky personal representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, Michigan 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 11/19/2025

Attorney: John R. Colip
Bar no. P25250
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

Laura A. Sadowsky
Personal representative(s)
2205W 300N
Peru, IN 46970
765-473-1048

PUBLIC NOTICE
The Penn Township Board of Review will meet on: Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 5pm at the Township Hall 60717 Main St, Vandalia, Michigan. The purpose of this meeting is to correct qualified errors. NO VALUATION APPEALS CAN BE HEARD.

The July and December Boards of Review have different authorities than the March Board of Review. The July and December Boards of Review meet to correct Qualified Errors, and to consider appeals related to the Principal Residence Exemption, Qualified Agricultural Exemption, Taxable Value Uncapping, the Qualified Start-up Business Exemption, and Poverty Exemptions.

Contact Information:
Don Jollay, MAAO
(815)546-8288
PennAssessor@gmail.com
P.O. Box 69
Vandalia, MI 49095

Abandoned vehicle auction
Road Runner towing and recovery December 4, 2025, at 8:30 AM

2011 Chevrolet
Vin 1G1ZC5E16BF252289

2015 Chevrolet
Vin 1G1JC6SH4F4168767

Contact Road Runner Towing at 269-429-5080 for viewing location & times Monday through Friday 8:30AM to 5PM social distancing rules still apply & bidding starts at acquired fees.

Notice of Self Storage Sale
Please take notice Just Simple Storage - Menominee located at N710 County Rd 577, Menoninee, MI, 49858 intends to hold an Auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur as an Online auction via www.bid13.com on 12/18/2025 at 12:00 PM. Unless stated otherwise, the description of the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. Unit #56. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice. 7528-326524

People Do Read Small Ads. You Did!

0900 LEGALS

30-DAY REVIEW & PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
ONTWA TOWNSHIP BOARD
PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN 2026 – 2030

Ontwa Township has completed the process of updating its Parks and Recreation Plan 2026 – 2030 and will publish the draft Plan for public review. The Parks and Recreation Plan will be available at the following locations for at least 30 days and until the final public hearing on the plan:

https://www.ontwatwp.org/
Ontwa Township Hall, 26225 US-12, Edwardsburg, MI 49112

The Parks and Recreation Plan is intended to help guide improvements to recreation facilities in the community. The process to develop the Plan included community input elements. A draft of the Plan has been completed, and the Ontwa Township Board is offering a public comment review period to give residents and stakeholders an opportunity to review and comment on the Plan prior to adoption.

To provide written comments on the draft Parks and Recreation Plan, please email zoning@ontwatwp.org or mail comments to Ontwa Township Hall, PO Box 209, Edwardsburg, MI 49112

The Ontwa Township Board will be considering the adoption of the Parks and Recreation Plan 2026 - 2030 at a public hearing. The public hearing on the draft Plan is scheduled as follows:

January 12, 2026, at 6:00 PM
Ontwa Township Hall
26225 US-12
Edwardsburg, MI 49112

The draft Plan is available and may be examined by the general public at the location and website noted above and at the public hearing. All interested persons are invited to submit their comments in person or in writing at or before the public hearing.

Ontwa Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed material being considered at the hearing, to individuals with disabilities upon seven (7) days' notice to the Township Clerk. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Township Clerk at the address (physical location) or telephone number listed below.

Ontwa Township Hall
26225 US-12
Edwardsburg, MI 49112
269-663-2347

Public Auction
Saturday December 13, 2025, at 11:00 am Furniture, tools, appliances, clothing & misc. abandoned items!

Kim Bailey	Elliot Rosenberry
Daniel Brown	Jason Taravat
Russell Carey	Angela Mazar
Liza Green	Connie Harris
Sheilla Marshall	Lori Tucker

Sale to be at:
Eddies Key Lock Storage
26065 US 12, Edwardsburg MI

Case No. 24-000609-CH Circuit Court Sale In pursuance and by virtue of an Order Granting Motion for Default Judgment and for Judicial Foreclosure as to All Defendants in the Circuit Court for the County of Cass, State of Michigan, made and entered on the 4th of August, A.D., 2025 in a certain cause therein pending, wherein CitiMortgage, Inc. was the Plaintiff and Any and all heirs, Assignees and Devisees of Esther A. Gogley and Rosalie Simpson were the Defendants. NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that I shall sell at public auction to the highest bidder, at public vendue, at the Cass County Courthouse (that being the place of holding the Circuit Court for said County), on the 14th of January, A.D., 2026 at 10:00 o`clock in the forenoon, Eastern Standard Time, the following described property, viz: A certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Township of Penn, County of Cass, State of Michigan: LOT NUMBER TEN (10), IN THE VILLAGE OF JAMESTOWN, ACCORDING TO THE RECORDED PLAT THEREOF. 14-100-100-010-00 c/k/a: 19125 Quaker St, Cassopolis, MI 49031 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale. Clint Roach, Deputy Sheriff _/s/ Melissa Z. Prantzalos Melissa Z. Prantzalos of Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. Attorney for CitiMortgage, Inc. Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 1576877 (11-15)(12-20)

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

RE: THE ORLA LEROY HOLCOMB AND DONNA MARIE HOLCOMB (NOW IRREVOCABLE) TRUST DATED JANUARY 7, 2000
EIN# 41-6632210

SETTLOR: ORLA LEROY HOLCOMB
DATE OF DEATH: September 16, 2023
DATE OF BIRTH: September 20, 1929

SURVIVING SETTLOR: DONNA MARIE HOLCOMB
DATE OF DEATH: November 1, 2025
DATE OF BIRTH: June 15, 1931

SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE: MARK L. HOLCOMB

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The Settlors of the above trust, ORLA LEROY HOLCOMB, died September 16, 2023, and DONNA MARIE HOLCOMB, died November 1, 2025; both resided at 201 Scenic View Drive, Niles, MI 49120 in the Township of Niles, Berrien County, Michigan. Creditors of ORLA LEROY HOLCOMB, Deceased, and DONNA MARIE HOLCOMB, Deceased and the above trust are notified that all claims against ORLA LEROY HOLCOMB, individually, DONNA MARIE HOLCOMB, individually and the above trust will be forever barred unless presented to Mark L. Holcomb, Successor Trustee of the Trust, or to Attorney James J. Mollison, whose respective addresses are listed below, within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice. No probate estate is necessary nor anticipated for either ORLA LEROY HOLCOMB or DONNA MARIE HOLCOMB.

Date: November 29, 2025

James J. Mollison [P17884]
Attorney for Trustee
4 South Lincoln Avenue
Niles, MI 49120
269-684-7600
C 269-930-4170

Mark L. Holcomb, Successor Trustee
283 Glenneyre Circle
St. Augustine, FL 32092
920-385-8650

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Sogol I. Plagany (P69690)
Orlans Law Group, PLLC
P.O. Box 5041, Troy MI, 48007
248-502-1359

STATE OF MICHIGAN
43RD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
CASS COUNTY
25-000508-CH

Court address: 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031
Court phone no.: (269)445-4412

ORDER REGARDING ALTERNATE SERVICE

U.S. Bank Trust Company, National Association, as Trustee, as successor-in-interest to U.S. Bank National Association, not in its individual capacity but solely as indenture trustee, for the holders of CIM Trust 2021-R1, Mortgage-Backed Notes, Series 2021-R1. c/o Plaintiff's attorney
Plaintiff(s).

V.

Unknown Heirs, Devisees & Assigns of Leona A. Hawkins.
Defendant(s).

THE COURT FINDS:
Service of process upon the defendant, Unknown Heirs, Devisees & Assigns of Leona A. Hawkins cannot reasonably be made as provided in MCR 2.105, and service of process may be made in a manner that is reasonably calculated to give the defendant actual notice of the proceedings and an opportunity to be heard.
IT IS ORDERED:
Service of the summons and complaint and a copy of this order shall be made by the following method(s).: First class mail to 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. Tracking or firmly affixing to the door at 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. Publishing for three consecutive weeks in the Cass County Legal News pursuant to MCR 2.106(D) and via certified mail return receipt requested to the last known address of: 17713 South Street, Vandalia, MI 49095. For each method used, proof of service must be filed promptly with the court.

/s/ Judge Mark A. Herman (P34735) 10/23/2025
Filed 10/23/2025 Monica McMichael Cass County Clerk

Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on JANUARY 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Joshua A. Hernandez and Laura E. Hernandez, husband and wife, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC dba Veterans United Home Loans, Mortgagee, dated August 11, 2021 and recorded August 20, 2021 in Liber 1202, Page 232 and Loan Modification Agreement recorded on May 1, 2023, in Liber 1231, Page 2419, Cass County Records, Michigan.
Said mortgage is now held by The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, an officer of the United States, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Eighty-One Thousand Three Hundred Eight and 3/100 Dollars ($181,308.03).
Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public vendue at the place of holding the circuit court within Cass County, Michigan at 10:00 AM on JANUARY 7, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Howard, Cass County Michigan, and are described as:
Lot 5 in Misty Acres, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 1-H of plats, Page 395, Cass County Records.
2202 Invicta Drive, Niles, Michigan 49120
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale.
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period.
Dated: November 29, 2025
File No. 25-013858
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400 (11-29)(12-20)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the Circuit Court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM, on January 7, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Timothy Grigalanz and Faustina Lynn Grigalanz, Husband and Wife Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., solely as nominee for Mortgage Research Center, LLC dba Veterans United Home Loans Foreclosing Assignee: Planet Home Lending, LLC Date of Mortgage: March 20, 2024 Date of Mortgage Recording: March 22, 2024 Amount claimed due on mortgage on the date of notice: $255,187.48 Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in the Township of Ontwa, Cass County, Michigan, and are described as: That part of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Town 8 South, Range 15 West, Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan, which is described as beginning at a point on the West line of said Section which is South 1322.74 feet from the Northwest corner of said Section; thence North 89°57'15" East, along the North 1/8th line of said Section 661.89 feet; thence South 0°03'20"East, 661.22 feet; thence. South 89°56'30" West 662.53 feet to the West line of said Section; thence, North along said line 661.37 feet to the point of beginning. EXCEPT, that part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Town 8 South, Range 15 West, which is described as: Beginning at a point on the West line of said Section which is South 1322.74 feet from the Northwest corner of said Section 14; thence North 89°57'15"East along the North 1/8th line of said Section, 661.89 feet; thence South 0°03'20" East, 300.00 feet; thence South 89°57'15" West, 662.18 feet; thence North 300.00 feet to the point of beginning. ALSO EXCEPTING, That part of the West Half of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 14, Township 8 South, Range 15 West, Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan, described as: Beginning at a point on the West line ' of said Section 14, a distance of 1622.74 feet South of the Northwest corner of said Section; thence North 89°57'15" East 662.18 feet; thence South 0°03'20" East 361.23 feet; thence South 89°56'30" West 379.00 feet; thence North O°O3'2O" East 276.23 feet; thence South 89°57'15" West 283.80 feet to the West line of said Section 14; thence North on said Section line 85.08 feet to the point of beginning. Commonly Known as: 70335 Martin Rd., Edwardsburg, MI 49112 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or upon the expiration of the notice required by MCL 600.3241a(c), whichever is later; or unless MCL 600.3240(16) applies. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention Purchaser: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee for any reason. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest, and the purchaser shall have no further recourse against the Mortgagor, the Mortgagee, or the Mortgagee's attorney. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. This notice is from a debt collector. Date of notice: 11/22/2025 Potestivo & Associates, P.C. 251 Diversion Street, Rochester, MI 48307 248-853-4400 321574 (11-22)(12-13)

OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Photo provided / Len Smit

A red fox drinks from the bird bath of Len Smit of Lincoln Twp in September.

Red fox spotted in daylight

One day back in September, Len Smit of Lincoln Township witnessed a red fox drinking from his backyard birdbath.

Jonathan Wuepper
Southwest Michigan Wildlife

The red fox is primarily nocturnal and thus Smit's daytime sighting was a special treat. The adult red fox is more likely to be seen in the daytime after the birth of pups, as the adults constantly feed the young. When not feeding young, the species averages about eight hours of activity from dim evening light through early morning hours.

In North America, the red fox is found throughout most of Canada, save the most northern islands in the Arctic Ocean. It is also found throughout the 49 US states of North America, with exception of the Alaskan panhandle, the extreme southwestern US and a portion of the Florida peninsula. The red fox also inhabits much of Eurasia and North Africa. It has been successfully introduced in Australia.

The red fox prefers open and semi-open areas and avoids large tracts of unbroken forests. In pre-settlement times, the red fox was likely confined to the prairies, oak openings and dunes of Southwest Michigan. The species benefited with the clearing of our old growth forests. Early local records are few, but we know it was present in Berrien County as early as the late 1870s.

Since World War II, the red fox has adapted itself to live among the suburban and urban areas of not only Southwest Michigan, but also among cities and suburbs across North America and Europe.

Photo provided / Brad Anderson

A juvenile bald eagle on Nov. 14, in flight over Weko Beach in Bridgman.

Brad Anderson of Bridgman photographed a juvenile bald eagle on Nov. 14 at Weko Beach. In Anderson's photo you will notice the eagle does not sport its distinctive white tail and head. This indicates the bird is a juvenile. It takes four years from the time an eagle hatches from the egg until it acquires its white head and tail.

From mid-October through November, many bald eagles that spent the summer in Canada and northern Michigan pass through Southwest Michigan to their wintering grounds in the southeast US. Several bald eagles may spend the winter in our region as long as there is open water, as fish is their primary diet.

Randy Schrubba of St. Joseph sent in a night time photo, taken Nov. 14, of several white-tailed deer eating pumpkins in his front yard.

Jonathan Wuepper is an area naturalist. Report your sightings to him at wuepperj@gmail.com

Photo provided / Randy Schrubba

White-tailed deer during the night of Nov. 14, eating pumpkins along Thayer Drive in St. Joseph.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

Audubon Christmas Bird Count: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Dec. 30. Sarett is looking for volunteers to count birds as a part of Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count event to create a census of birds. Volunteers will cover a portion of the official count area and drive around to tally up all the birds they see. To volunteer, please call (269) 927-4832 ext. 102 or email Mike at mikem@sarett.org.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

DNR advises waterfowl hunters to safeguard against bird flu amid outbreak

From THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials are reminding waterfowl hunters to take precautions to protect themselves and domestic animals from highly pathogenic avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu. This fall, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has reported increasing outbreaks of HPAI in commercial and backyard poultry flocks, including new detections in counties with popular waterfowl hunting destinations.

The DNR reports more HPAI detections in 2025 than were found in 2024; 130 wild birds have tested positive for HPAI in Michigan, with most detections in Canada geese, bald eagles and red-tailed hawks. Wildlife detections and pending cases are posted on the DNR's HPAI webpage.

The disease has been found in every Michigan watershed, indicating that it has occurred throughout the state.

HPAI has been detected in surrounding states and other parts of the U.S. as well. Hunters traveling out of state are advised to follow all health and safety precautions regardless of where they are hunting. Visit the USDA H5N1 Influenza webpage for more information about national detections and response.

Michigan's earliest waterfowl season opened Sept. 1 and the final season closes Feb. 15. Learn more at Michigan.gov/Waterfowl.

"Make sure to take appropriate precautions when field dressing wild birds. In order to kill the virus, use a food thermometer to ensure that meat is cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit," said Dr. Scott Larsen, DNR wildlife veterinarian. "It's also important to properly clean and disinfect gear and equipment before coming into contact with domestic birds."

HPAI is a highly contagious respiratory disease that causes sickness and sometimes death in wild birds and mammals. HPAI infections can occur at any time of the year, but upticks are expected during spring and fall waterfowl migrations. Wild birds can carry HPAI without appearing sick.

Anyone who observes a die-off of six or more wild birds should report it through the DNR Eyes in the Field online tool or a local DNR field office.

Precautions for waterfowl hunters

The risk of HPAI infecting people is low, but the virus can spread through direct contact with infected animals or material. Hunters should always take precautions when handling wild birds to avoid contracting or spreading bird flu:

- Do not harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead.
- Process wild birds in the field. Remains from processed birds should be buried on-site or double-bagged and disposed of with household trash.
- Wear rubber or disposable gloves while handling and cleaning wild birds, and wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand cleanser, even if hands are not visibly soiled.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth when handling wild birds.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while handling or cleaning wild birds.
- Cook all meat to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit to kill any viruses.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all knives, equipment and surfaces that come into contact with wild birds.
- If you have close contact with obviously sick or dead wild birds, or surfaces contaminated by them, monitor for these symptoms for 10 days after your last exposure: Fever with temperature over 100 degrees Fahrenheit or chills (fever may not always be present); sore throat difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; eye tearing, redness or irritation; runny or stuffy nose; muscle or body aches.

For more information about HPAI and human health, visit the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services webpage for Communicable Disease Information and Resources or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage for Avian Flu.

Protecting domestic animals from infection

HPAI has been found in Michigan commercial and backyard domestic poultry, as well as dairy cattle. Waterfowl hunters who care for domestic animals, including hunting dogs, cats and backyard poultry, should take the following precautions:

- Keep domestic animals away from wild birds, including dead waterfowl.
- Keep domestic animals away from hunting apparel and footwear that has come into contact with wild birds or their mucous, saliva or feces.
- Cook waterfowl meat to 165 degrees Fahrenheit before feeding it to other animals.
- Shower after hunting and before tending to domestic animals.
- Wash hands immediately before and after caring for animals.

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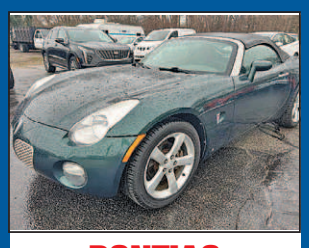

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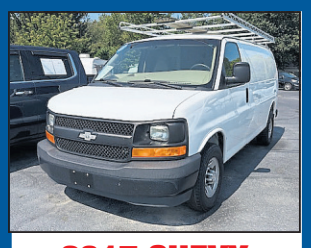

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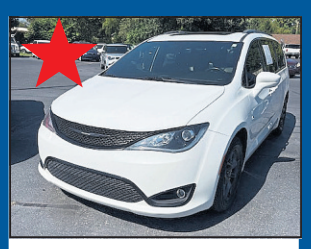

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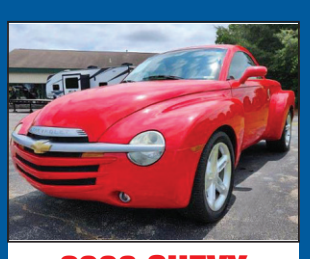

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